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THE SONNETS OF
MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI



The Sonnets of Michelangelo Buonarroti

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

S. ELIZABETH HALL

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
A LIFE OF MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI
TRANSLATED BY THE SAME FROM THE
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LIFE OF

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LIFE OF MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

(Translated from the Italian of Ascanio Condivi.)

I. MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI, a painter and sculptor of singular excellence, derived his origin from the Counts of Canossa, a family of the district of Reggio, noble and illustrious, both through their own merit and ancient descent, and also through alliance with the Imperial family. Forasmuch as Beatrice, sister of Henry II., was given in marriage to Count Bonifazio da Canossa, who was then lord of Mantua: and of this union was born the Countess Matilda, a woman of rare and excellent wisdom and piety: who, after the death of her husband Gottifredo, held in Italy, besides Mantua, Lucca, Parma and Reggio, and that part of Tuscany, which is now called the patrimony of San Piero. And she, having in her lifetime done many things worthy of record, at her death was buried in the Abbey of San Benedetto on the outskirts of Mantua, which she herself had built and liberally endowed.

II. A descendant of this family, one Messer Simone, came as Podestà to Florence, in the year 1250, and, as the reward of his virtue, was made a citizen of that country, and head of one of the six divisions: for the city at that time was divided into six parts, though now it has only four. And as the Guelf faction was then ruling in Florence, in consequence of the many benefits which he had received from that party, he ceased to be a Ghibelline, and became a Guelf; changing the

colour of his arms, so that where formerly there was a white dog rampant with a bone in his mouth in a red field, he made the dog of gold in an azure field: and the Signoria then gave him five red lilies on a portcullis, and likewise the crest with two horns of a bull, one gold and the other azure, which at this day may be seen painted on their ancient shield. The original arms of Messer Simone are to be seen in the palace of the Podestà, where he caused them to be made of marble, as was the custom with most of those who held that office.

III. The reason why the family changed its name in Florence, and, instead of da Canossa, was then called de' Buonarroti, was as follows: The name of Buonarroti having been in their family generation after generation almost continually till the time of Michelangelo, who indeed had a brother called Buonarroto: and many of these Buonarroti having been of the number of the Signori, that is to say, of the chief magistrates of that Republic: and the said brother especially being of their number at the time that Pope Leo was at Florence, as may be seen in the annals of that city: this name, being passed on from one to another of them for so long, became the cognomen of the whole family: and this was the more easy, inasmuch as the custom of Florence in elections and nominations is to add, after the proper name of the citizens, that of their father, of their grandfather, of their great-grandfather, and sometimes of ancestors still more remote: so that from these successive Buonarroti, and from that Simone who was the first in Florence of the family descended from the house of Canossa, they were called de' Buonarroti Simone, by which name they are known to this day. Finally, when Pope Leo X. came to Florence, besides giving many other privileges to that

house, he added to their arms the azure ball of the arms of the house of the Medici, with three golden lilies.

IV. Of this house, then, was sprung Michelangelo, whose father was named Lodovico di Leonardo Buonarroti Simone, a good and religious man, of habits rather antiquated than otherwise: and to him, being chief magistrate of Chiusi and of Caprese in the Casentino, this son was born in the year of our salvation 1474, on Monday the 6th of March, four hours before daybreak. A marvellous nativity certainly, and one which showed at once how great the boy should be, and of how great genius: for Mercury and Venus being in the second house of Jupiter, and having a friendly aspect, it gave promise of that which did indeed ensue, namely, that the child then born should be of noble and lofty intellect, succeeding in every undertaking without exception, but principally in those arts which delight the senses, as painting, sculpture, and architecture. His period of office drawing to an end, the father returned to Florence, and put the child out to nurse in a village called Settignano, three miles from the city, where they still have an estate: which indeed was one of the first properties acquired by Messer Simone da Canossa in that country. The nurse was the daughter of a sculptor, and was likewise married to a sculptor. On account of which Michelangelo is wont to say that it is no wonder that he should take such delight in the chisel: jesting merely, unless perchance he say this in earnest, knowing that the nurse's milk has so much power within us, that changing the constitution of the body, it often introduces a new propensity, quite diverse from that which belongs to us by nature.

V. And when the boy grew up, and reached a fit

age, his father perceiving him to be of excellent parts, and desiring that he should be instructed in letters, sent him to the school of one Francesco of Urbino, who at that time was teaching grammar in Florence; but although he derived some profit from these studies, yet heaven and nature, which are with difficulty resisted, drew him thence to painting: so that, whenever he could steal any time, he could not refrain from hastening to draw somewhere or other, getting what instruction he could from artists; among whom he was very familiar with one Francesco Granacci, a pupil of Domenico del Grillandaio, who, perceiving the inclination and fervent desire of the boy, resolved to help him, and continually exhorted him to persevere; now providing him with drawings, now taking him with him to the master's workshop, or wherever there was any work going forward from which he could derive profit; and his influence, added to nature, which was continually urging him on, was so powerful that he entirely abandoned letters. Wherefore he incurred the displeasure of his father and his father's brothers, who held this art in aversion, and was often severely beaten by them; for they, not knowing how excellent and noble is the art, thought it shame that one of their house should practise it. But although this caused him much trouble, nevertheless it did not avail to turn him back: nay rather, being more eager, he resolved to attempt working in colour. And Granacci having one day placed before him a print representing Sant' Antonio, beaten by devils, the work of one Martini d'Olanda, an able draughtsman according to the standard of the time, he made a copy of it on wood: and being provided by Granacci with colours and brushes, he painted it with such an excellent arrangement and harmony of colour, that not only did

it arouse wonder in all who saw it, but, as some say, envy in Domenico (the most esteemed painter of that age, as may in many ways be clearly perceived): and he, in order to make the work appear less marvellous, used to say that it had issued from his own workshop, as though he himself had had some part in it. In painting this panel, since, besides the figure of the saint, there were many strange forms and demoniacal monsters, Michelangelo used so great diligence, that he coloured no part of it without having first compared it with nature. Thus, going into the fish market, he studied the form and colour of the wings of fishes, also the colour of their eyes, and of every other part, in order to represent them in his picture: and thus bringing it to the utmost perfection of which he was capable, he excited the admiration of the whole world, and, as I have said, some envy on the part of Grillandaio. And this became more evident when one day, Michelangelo asking him for one of his books of drawings, in which were represented shepherds with their sheep and dogs, landscapes, buildings, ruins and the like, he would not lend it to him. In truth, he had the reputation of being somewhat jealous; for not only was he discourteous towards Michelangelo, but also towards his own brother, whom, when he was making progress, and showing great promise, he sent into France, not so much for his own profit, as some said, as in order that he himself should remain the first painter in Florence. And these facts I wished to mention, because I have been told that the son of Domenico is wont to attribute the divine excellence of Michelangelo in great part to the teaching of his father, though he did not give him any help whatever: howbeit Michelangelo does not complain of this, but, on the contrary, praises Domenico both in regard to his

art, and to his personal character. But let us leave this short digression and return to our narrative.

VI. About the same time equal wonder was aroused by another achievement of his, which was moreover enlivened by the following pleasantry. A head having been given to him to copy, he reproduced it so exactly, that when he returned to the owner the copy instead of the original, the deception was not perceived by him, until the lad was discovered comparing it, and laughing at the trick with one of his companions. And many were led to compare the two, but found no difference, inasmuch as, besides the accuracy of the copy, Michelangelo had smoked it, to make it appear as old as the original. This brought him much reputation.

VII. And so the boy drew this thing and that, but had no regular place or course of study, when it happened one day that he was taken by Granacci to the garden of the Medici at San Marco; a garden which Lorenzo the Magnificent, father of Pope Leo, a man remarkable for every excellence, had adorned with various antique statues and figures. Michelangelo seeing these works, and appreciating their beauty, henceforth went no more to the workshop of Domenico, or anywhere else, but remained here the whole day, as in a better school of art, always drawing something. And one day studying, among other things, the head of a Faun, represented as already old, with a long beard, and a laughing face, although, the statue being very ancient, the mouth was hardly recognisable, he was beyond measure pleased with it, and resolved to copy it in marble. And as Lorenzo the Magnificent was having the polished marbles prepared there, which were to adorn that most noble library, which he and his ancestors had gathered together out of the whole

world [this building, having been abandoned in consequence of the death of Lorenzo and other circumstances, was many years afterwards taken in hand again by Pope Clement, though it remained in an imperfect condition, so that the books are still packed in chests], Michelangelo asked the sculptors to give him a piece of the marble, and being also provided with tools, he set himself with so great industry and attention to copy the Faun, that he brought it to perfection in a few days, supplying from his own imagination all that was wanting in the antique ; that is to say, the mouth open like that of a man that was laughing, so that the hollow of it was seen with all the teeth. Meanwhile, Lorenzo himself coming one day to see what progress was being made with the marble works, found the boy occupied in polishing the head, and drawing near, observing first the excellence of the work, and taking note of the age of the boy, he marvelled much : and although he praised the work, yet bantering him as a boy, he said, “ Why, you have made that Faun old, and yet you have left him all his teeth. Do you not know that, with old men of that age, one or two are always missing ? ” It seemed a thousand years to Michelangelo before Lorenzo went, and he could correct the error ; and as soon as he was alone, he took away one of the upper teeth from his old man, making the gum hollow, as though the tooth had come out with the root. He looked with the greatest eagerness for Lorenzo to return the following day ; and when he came and saw the goodness and simplicity of the boy, he was much amused ; then noting the perfection of the work and the boy’s youth, being, as he was, the patron of every excellence, he resolved to assist and befriend such great talent, and to take him into his house ; and when he had learnt whose son he was, he said,

“Go, tell your father that I should like to speak to him.”

VIII. And Michelangelo having returned home, and delivered the message of Lorenzo, his father, who divined for what reason he was summoned, was with great difficulty persuaded by Granacci and others to go: nay, rather, he complained that Granacci was leading his son astray, and declared positively that he would never allow him to be a stone-cutter: while it availed Granacci nothing to explain to him how great was the difference between a sculptor and a stone-cutter, though he disputed long on this point. However, when he entered the presence of Lorenzo, being asked if he was willing to give up his son, he could not refuse: “Nay,” he added, “not only Michelangelo, but all of us with our lives and powers are for the pleasure of your Magnificence.” And being asked by Lorenzo what he expected, he replied, “No craft have I ever practised; but have always lived on my own poor income, taking care of the little property that was left me by my ancestors: seeking not only to preserve, but to increase it as much as in my diligence it was possible.” To which Lorenzo replied, “Well, consider if there is anything in Florence which I can do for you, and make use of me, for I will confer on you the greatest favour that I can.” And having dismissed the old man, he caused a good room in the house to be given to Michelangelo, and supplied him with everything he required, treating him no otherwise than if he were his son; both in other respects, and also at his table, at which, as was natural, were seated every day persons of the most noble birth and of high position. And it being the custom that those who were present at the beginning should sit, each according to his rank,

near to Lorenzo, not moving from their places who-
ever might afterwards arrive: it often happened that
Michelangelo sat above the sons of Lorenzo and other
important persons, a multitude of whom continually
graced that princely mansion. By all of these Michel-
angelo was much caressed, and encouraged in his
honourable pursuit; but above all by Lorenzo him-
self, who, perceiving him to be possessed of talent
and judgment, summoned him to his presence many
times in the day, showing him his jewels, cornelians,
medallions, and similar things of great value.

IX. When he entered the house of Lorenzo, Michelangelo was between fifteen and sixteen years of age, and he remained there till the death of his patron, which occurred in the year 1492, that is to say about two years. During this time, a post in the Customs becoming vacant, which could only be held by a citizen of Florence, Lodovico, the father of Michelangelo came to Lorenzo, and requested it of him in the following words: "Lorenzo, I can do nought else but read and write: now the partner of Marco Pucci in the Customs being dead, I should like to take his place, for I believe that I could fitly discharge the duties of such an office." Lorenzo laid his hand on his shoulder, and smiling said, "You will always be poor." For he had expected him to ask for a greater thing. Then he added, "If you wish to enter into partnership with Marco, you can do so, until there is a chance of something better." The office brought in eight scudi a month, or thereabouts.

X. Meanwhile Michelangelo was diligently pursuing his studies, showing Lorenzo every day some fruit of his labours. Now in the same house resided Poliziano, who, as everyone knows, and as his own writings testify, was a man of the greatest learning and intellect. He, per-

ceiving in Michelangelo a mind so elevated, loved him much, and continually urged him to persevere with his studies (though he stood not in need of it): always explaining something to him, or giving him something to do. Among other things, one day he suggested to him as a subject the rape of Dejanira and the battle of the Centaurs,¹ explaining to him the whole story in detail. And Michelangelo set himself to represent it in marble, in mezzo-rilievo, and with so good a result that I remember hearing him say that, when he looked at it, he perceived what a wrong he had done his own nature in not devoting himself to the art of sculpture, judging by that work how well he would have succeeded in it. Nor does he say this by way of boasting, being a very modest man, but because he is truly vexed at having been so unfortunate as to have remained idle, sometimes for ten or twelve years, through the fault of others, as will be seen below. This work of his may still be seen in Florence in his own house, and the height of the figures is about two palms. He had scarcely finished this work when the magnificent Lorenzo passed from this life. Michelangelo returned to his father's house, and was so much afflicted by his death that for many days he could do nothing. Then, however, recovering himself, and purchasing a large piece of marble, which for many years had lain exposed to wind and weather, he made therefrom a Hercules, four cubits high, which was afterwards sent to France.

XI. While he was making this statue, much snow

¹ *N.B.*—“Critics have attempted to find in it (this composition) the legend of the Centaurs and the Lapithæ, also the story of Herakles and Eurytion. . . . The details of the bas-relief, however, are such as to make it uncertain what particular episode of the Heraklean myth he chose to represent.”—J. A. Symonds, “Life of Michelangelo,” vol. i. p. 27.

having fallen in Florence, Pier de' Medici, the elder son of Lorenzo, who had inherited his father's position but not his virtues, wishing (for he was but young) to have a statue of snow made in the courtyard of his palace, remembered Michelangelo, and sending for him directed him to make the statue. And he desired him to remain in the house, as in his father's time, giving him the same room, and having him always at his table as before: at which the same custom prevailed as when his father was alive: that is, that whoever took his seat at table at the beginning of the meal changed his place for no person, however great, who arrived later.

XII. Lodovico, the father of Michelangelo, having now become more reconciled to his son, seeing him almost always in the company of great men, gave him better and more honourable garments. Thus the youth remained some months with Piero, and was much caressed by him: indeed Piero was wont to boast of having two persons in his household who were remarkable men, one being Michelangelo, and the other a Spanish groom, who, besides the beauty of his person, which was marvellous, was so clever and strong, and so vigorous a runner, that Piero, though galloping at full speed on horseback, could not get an inch ahead of him.

XIII. About this time Michelangelo, at the request of the prior of Santo Spirito, a church much honoured in the city of Florence, made a crucifix of wood, rather less than life-size, which may be seen to this day above the high altar of that church. He had much intimate intercourse with this prior, who not only showed him much courtesy, but also provided him with a room, and with bodies from which to study anatomy: and in no way could he have given him a greater pleasure. Thus it was that he began to devote himself to that

study which he continued to pursue as long as fortune allowed.

XIV. In the house of Piero was a certain man, surnamed Cardiere, who used to afford Lorenzo much pleasure by his wonderful manner of improvising verses to the lyre, an art which Lorenzo himself also professed, so that there used to be improvisations almost every evening after supper. He being a friend of Michelangelo confided to him a vision, which was as follows: That Lorenzo de' Medici had appeared to him with no clothing but one black and tattered garment: and had bade him tell his son that in a short time he would be driven out of his house, and would never more return thither. Pier de' Medici indeed was insolent and overbearing, insomuch that neither the goodness of the Cardinal Giovanni his brother, nor the courtesy and humaneness of Giuliano could do as much to retain him in Florence, as his vices did to cause him to be expelled thence. Michelangelo exhorted him to warn Piero, and do the bidding of Lorenzo, but Cardiere, fearing the character of Piero, kept the dream to himself. Another morning, Michelangelo being in the courtyard of the palace, Cardiere appeared all terrified and distressed, and again he said to him: That that night Lorenzo had appeared to him in the same garment as before: and he being awake and having his eyes open, Lorenzo had dealt him a sharp box on the ear, because he had not reported that which he had seen to Piero. Michelangelo then rebuked him, and argued so strongly with him, that Cardiere, taking courage, departed on foot for Careggi, a villa belonging to the Medici, about three miles distant from the city. But when he was almost half way there, he met Piero returning home, and, stopping him, he unfolded to him what he had seen and heard.

Piero turned the matter into ridicule, and, beckoning to the grooms, made many jests with them upon it: and his Chancellor, who at that time was Cardinal di Bibbiena, said to Cardiere: "You are a fool. To whom do you suppose that Lorenzo has the more good will; to his son or to you? If to his son, would he not rather have appeared to him, if there were any truth in this, than to another person?" Mocking him thus, they let him go on his way. And he returning home and relating his troubles to Michelangelo, so impressed him by what he said of the vision, that Michelangelo took the thing for a certainty; and two days after, with two companions, departed from Florence, and went to Bologna, and thence to Venice, fearing that, if that which Cardiere predicted came to pass, he would not be safe in Florence.

XV. But a few days after, for want of ready money (for he was paying the expenses of his companions) he resolved to return to Florence: and coming to Bologna, he met with the following adventure. There was in that town, in the time of Messer Giovanni Bentivogli, a law that every foreigner who entered Bologna should receive the impression of a seal in red wax on his thumb nail. Michelangelo then having entered inadvertently without the seal, was taken, together with his companions, to the office of the Customs, and fined fifty Bolognese lire. He had not the means to pay this sum, but one Messer Gianfrancesco Aldovrandi, a gentleman of Bologna, who was at that time one of the Sixteen, happening to see him in the office, and hearing what had occurred, caused him to be liberated, chiefly because he knew that he was a sculptor. And the gentleman having asked him to come to his house, Michelangelo thanked him for the invitation, but excused himself, saying that he had with him two com-

panions, and that he neither wished to leave them, nor to burden him with their company. To which the gentleman replied, “I will come and travel with you too, if you will pay my expenses.” Being persuaded by these words and by other arguments, Michelangelo, excusing himself to his companions, and giving them what little money he still possessed, bade them farewell, and went to stay with the gentleman.

XVI. In the meantime the Medici with all their adherents having been driven out of Florence, came to Bologna, and were lodged in the house of the Rossi: thus the vision of Cardiere, whether it were a delusion of the devil, or a divine warning, or the result of a vivid imagination, was verified: a thing truly marvellous and worthy to be recorded: which accordingly, as I heard it from Michelangelo himself, even so I have narrated. Between the death of the Magnificent Lorenzo and the exile of his son there intervened about three years, so that Michelangelo would be from twenty to twenty-one years of age: and he, in order to escape the first fury of the revolution, until the city of Florence should assume some definite political form, remained with the above-mentioned gentleman of Bologna: who honoured him greatly, being delighted with his genius: and every evening he caused him to read aloud to him something from Dante or Petrarch, and sometimes from Boccaccio, until he went to sleep.

XVII. One day, as he was walking with Michelangelo in Bologna, he took him to see the tomb of San Domenico in the church dedicated to that saint. Now in this two marble figures were wanting, namely, a San Petronio, and a kneeling angel with a candelabrum in his hand: and he asked Michelangelo if he felt inclined to make them, and when he replied in the affirmative he caused the commission to be given to him: and he

caused him to be paid thirty ducats, eighteen for the San Petronio, and twelve for the angel. The figures were three palms in height, and may still be seen in the same place. But afterwards Michelangelo, being suspicious of a certain Bolognese sculptor, who complained that he had robbed him of the commission for the above-mentioned statues, since it had before been promised to himself, and threatened to do him an injury, returned to Florence, where things had completely settled down, so that he could live securely in his own house. He remained with Messer Granfrancesco Aldovrandi rather more than a year.

XVIII. On returning to his own city, Michelangelo set himself to make a marble Cupid, six or seven years of age, lying down as if asleep: and Lorenzo di Pier Francesco de' Medici (for whom meanwhile Michelangelo had made a young San Giovanni) seeing it, and judging it to be most beautiful, said to him: "If you would treat it in such a way that it should appear to have been buried, I would send it to Rome, where it would pass for an antique, and you would sell it for a much higher price." And Michelangelo, hearing this, forthwith set to work upon the Cupid, and gave it the appearance of having been made long before, being one from whom no sort of ingenuity was hidden. And the statue being sent to Rome, the Cardinal di San Giorgio bought it as an antique for two hundred ducats: although the man who took the money wrote to Florence directing that thirty ducats should be paid to Michelangelo, since he had received that sum for the Cupid: deceiving both Lorenzo di Pier Francesco and Michelangelo. But, meanwhile, it having come to the ear of the Cardinal how the Cupid had been made in Florence, indignant at finding that he had been tricked, he sent thither a gentleman of his suite, who, pretending

that he was seeking a sculptor to execute certain works in Rome, after seeing some others, was directed to the house of Michelangelo: and when he saw the young man, in order that he might cautiously gain some light on the matter about which he had come, he requested that he would show him something. But he, having nothing to show, took a pen (for at that time chalk was not in use) and drew him a hand so beautifully that he stood astonished. Then he inquired whether Michelangelo had ever done anything in sculpture: and he replying yes, and among other things a Cupid of such and such a size and attitude, the gentleman learnt that which he wished to know: and narrating the circumstances to him as they had occurred, promised him that if he would go with him to Rome, he would enable him to recover the rest of the money, and would introduce him to the Cardinal, who, he knew, would welcome him with much pleasure. Michelangelo then, partly through indignation at having been defrauded, partly because he desired to see Rome, so much had the gentleman extolled it as the widest field in which each could show his talent, went with him and lodged in his house, near to the Cardinal's palace: who, meanwhile, having been informed by letters how the matter stood, caused the man to be apprehended who had sold the statue to him for an antique: and returning it to him, he recovered his own money. This statue came afterwards by some means into the hands of Duke Valentino, and was given to the Marchioness of Mantua, and by her sent to Mantua, where it may still be found in the house of that family. In this matter the Cardinal of San Giorgio was blamed by some, who said that if the work, being seen by all the artists in Rome, by all equally was judged most beautiful, its being modern ought not so much to have offended him that he should

have relinquished it for the sake of two hundred scudi, being, as he was, a man of great wealth. But that, if the deception practised on him annoyed him, he had the power of punishing the man, by making him pay over the rest of the money he had received to the owner of the statue, which he had already taken into his house. But no one fared worse in the transaction than Michelangelo, who gained nothing more by it than the sum he had received in Florence. And that the Cardinal of San Giorgio understood little about statues, and took little pleasure in them, this fact makes sufficiently clear ; that during the whole time that Michelangelo remained with him, which was about a year, he received no commission from him to make anything.

XIX. However there was not wanting one to recognise the opportunity, and make use of it : for Messer Jacopo Galli, a Roman gentleman of great talent, commissioned him to make in his house a marble Bacchus, ten palms in height, the form and aspect of which correspond in every particular with the description of the ancient writers : for the face is laughing, and the look of the eyes side-long and lascivious, as the eyes of those are wont to be who are exceedingly possessed with the love of wine. He holds in his right hand a cup, like one about to drink, and is looking at it, as though he were taking pleasure in that liquor of which he was the inventor ; on which account also, Michelangelo has wreathed his head with a garland of vine-leaves. On his left arm he carries the skin of a tiger, an animal dedicated to Bacchus, as being one who greatly delights in the grape. And he represented the skin rather than the animal, in order to signify that by indulging the sensual appetite for that fruit, and the liquor made from it, one loses at last life itself. In his left hand also he carries a

bunch of grapes, which a little satyr at his feet, with a pleased and alert air, is furtively eating ; the satyr appears to be about seven years of age, the Bacchus being eighteen. The above-mentioned Messer Jacopo commissioned him to make a Cupid also : and both the one and the other of these works can be seen at the present time in the house of Messer Giuliano and Messer Paolo Galli, courteous and worthy gentlemen, with whom Michelangelo has always maintained an intimate friendship.

XX. Shortly afterwards, at the request of the Cardinal di San Dionigi, called the Cardinal Rovano, he made out of a piece of marble that marvellous statue of our Lady, which is now in the chapel of the Madonna della Febbre : though at first it was placed in a chapel belonging to the King of France in the Church of Santa Petronilla, near to the Sacristy of San Piero, which some say was formerly a temple of Mars : this was afterwards pulled down by Bramante, as it interfered with the design of the new church. Our Lady is seated on the stone which forms the pedestal for the Cross, with the body of her dead Son on her lap, and is of such great and rare beauty, that no one sees her without being inwardly moved to pity : a conception truly worthy of that goodness which befitted the Son of God, and such a Mother : although there are some who object that the Mother is too young, considering the age of her son. When I was discussing this point with Michelangelo one day, " Do you not know," he replied, " that chaste women keep their freshness much longer than those who are unchaste ? How much more then a virgin, to whom not the smallest wanton desire has ever occurred which might have injured the body ? I would also point out to you, that it is not incredible that such freshness and

flower of youth, besides being maintained in her by natural means, should have been fostered by Divine Power, in order to prove to the world the virginity and perpetual purity of the Mother. And this was not necessary in the case of the Son: nay, rather the contrary: for, since the object is to show that the Son of God really took, as He did, a human body, and was liable to all to which an ordinary man is liable, except to sin: there is no need to conceal the human behind the Divine, but rather one should leave it in its natural course and order, and show Him to be the exact age which He was. Therefore do not wonder if, considering these things, I have made the holy Virgin, Mother of God, in comparison with her Son, somewhat younger than under ordinary circumstances she would appear at that age, while I have given to her Son His natural age.” A consideration worthy of the greatest theologian, which would perhaps have been marvellous in others, but not in him, whom God and nature formed not only to work with his hands as no one else could do, but also worthily to conceive the most divine ideas, as one may see, not only in this matter, but in very many of his discourses and writings. When Michelangelo executed the work above described, he was about twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. By this achievement he won great fame and reputation, so much so that it was now the general opinion that he not only far surpassed all others of his own and the preceding time, but that he even rivalled the ancients.

XXI. After he had executed these works, he was obliged on account of family affairs to return to Florence, where he stayed some time, and made the statue which stands to this day before the entrance to the palace of the Signoria, at the end

of the terrace, and is always called “The Giant.” And this is how it came to pass. The Superintendents of the Works at Santa Maria del Fiore had in their possession a piece of marble nine cubits in height, which had been brought from Carrara a hundred years before by a sculptor who, by what appeared, was not so skilful as he might have been. For, in order to bring it home more conveniently, and with less fatigue, he had blocked it out in the quarry itself, but in such a way, that neither he himself nor anyone else had ever ventured to carve even a small statue out of it, to say nothing of so large a one. Since no good could be done with the marble as it was, it occurred to one Andrea dal Monte of San Savino, that he might obtain it from the Superintendents, and he asked them to make him a present of it, undertaking to carve a figure out of it, by adding certain pieces; but before they decided to give it to him, they sent for Michelangelo, and told him that Andrea wished to have the marble, and what he thought of doing with it; and hearing Michelangelo’s opinion, that he would be able to carve something good out of it, they finally offered it to him. He accepted it, and without adding any other pieces, he carved from it the above-mentioned statue so exactly, that, as one can see, at the top of the head and at the base, the original surface of the marble is still visible. This he also did in some other works, as for instance, on the tomb of Pope Giulio II. in the statue which represents “Contemplative Life.” And indeed this is a sign often left by artists to show that they are masters of their art. But in “The Giant” it appeared the more marvellous: for, besides that he added no other pieces, it is also impossible (as Michelangelo is wont to say), or at least very difficult in sculpture to correct the

faults of blocking. He had for that work four hundred ducats, and he brought it to completion in eighteen months.

XXII. And that there might be no part of the art of sculpture to which he should not put his hand, after he had finished "The Giant," at the request of Piero Soderini, his great friend, he cast in bronze a life-sized statue, which was sent to France; and also a David, with a prostrate Goliath. That which is seen in the courtyard of the palace of the Signori is from the hand of Donatello, a man of great excellence in that art, and much praised by Michelangelo, except for one thing, that he had not patience to polish his works, so that, though they produced a wonderful effect from a distance, when seen near at hand they were less esteemed. He also cast in bronze a Madonna with her infant son in her lap, which was bought for one hundred ducats by certain Flemish merchants of the family of the Moscheroni, which is one of the noblest in that country, and sent by them to Flanders. And that he might not altogether neglect painting, he made a Madonna on a round panel for Messer Agnol Doni, a Florentine citizen, for which he received from him seventeen ducats.

XXIII. He remained there for some time without doing much in this kind of art, but devoting himself to reading the works of poets and orators in the vulgar tongue, and to making sonnets for his own pleasure, until, on the death of Pope Alessandro VI., he was summoned to Rome by Pope Giulio II., one hundred ducats being paid to him in Florence for his travelling-charges. Michelangelo was at that time about twenty-nine years of age; for if we count from his birth, which was, as has been said, in 1474, to the death of the above-mentioned Alessandro, which was in 1503, we

shall find that this was the number of the intervening years.

XXIV. After he arrived in Rome, many months passed before Giulio II. decided what he should require him to do. Finally he conceived the idea of setting him to make his own tomb; and when he saw the design, it pleased him so much that he sent him at once to Carrara to obtain as much marble as would be necessary for such an undertaking, causing him to be paid one thousand ducats in Florence by Alamanno Salviati for this purpose. He remained in the mountains of Carrara with two servants and a horse, supplied only with the means of livelihood, for more than eight months. And while he was there, as he was one day surveying the country from a hill which overlooked the coast, he conceived the desire of making it into a Colossus which should be seen by the sailors from a distance. This was chiefly suggested by the convenience of the rock, which could easily be hewn into the required shape: and he was also urged by emulation of the ancients, who, lighting upon that place, perhaps for the same purpose as Michelangelo, or to pass the time, or for some other reason, have left there some imperfect and rough-hewn monuments, in which their skill can be well seen. And he would certainly have carried it out, if he had had sufficient time, or if the undertaking on which he had come had allowed of it: indeed I once heard him express great regret at not having done so. Having now hewn out and chosen, as he thought, sufficient marbles, and had them carried down to the sea-shore, he left one of his men to get them shipped, and he himself returned to Rome. As he had stayed a few days in Florence, he found when he arrived that part of the marbles had already reached the Ripa: and getting them on shore, he had

them carried to the piazza di San Pietro, behind Santa Caterina, where he had his room near to the corridor. The quantity of marble was so great that as it lay on the piazza it was an object of wonder to everyone, and caused great joy to the Pope: who showed such unbounded favour to Michelangelo, that, when he had begun to work, he came many times to seek him in his house, discoursing with him there both about the tomb and about other things, just as he would have done with a brother of his own. And in order to be able to come to him more conveniently, he ordered a draw-bridge to be thrown across from the corridor to the room of Michelangelo, that he might by this means be able to enter it privately.

XXV. These great favours bestowed in such a manner caused him (as often happens in Courts) to become the object of envy, and of its consequence, endless persecution. For Bramante, the architect, who was in great favour with the Pope, by repeating what is commonly said, that it is a thing of evil omen to make one's own tomb in one's lifetime, and other tales of the sort, caused him to change his mind. Bramante was urged not only by envy, but by the fear he had of Michelangelo's judgment, for he had discovered many of his evil deeds. For Bramante, being a spendthrift, and given, as everyone knows, to all sorts of pleasure, and the provision made for him by the Pope, large as it was, not sufficing him, sought to push on the work by making the walls of bad material, and not so firm and stable as their height and extent required: which can clearly be seen by anyone in the building of San Pietro in Vaticano, in the corridors of Belvedere, in the Convent of San Pietro ad Vincula, and in other buildings constructed by him; all of which it has been necessary to restore

and fortify with buttresses, and barbacans, inasmuch as they were falling down, or would have fallen down in a short time. Now because he had no doubt that Michelangelo was aware of these evil deeds of his, he continually sought to drive him out of Rome, or at least to deprive him of the favour of the Pope, and of that glory and profit, which with his industry he might have gained. And this he succeeded in doing, as far as the tomb was concerned ; for, if it had been carried out according to the first design, there is no doubt that Michelangelo would have borne the palm in his own art over every one (be it said without envy) who had ever been called a sculptor, having abundant opportunity in which to show his power. What he would have made of it is shown, not only by other things that he has done, but above all by the two prisoners, already modelled for that work : which all who have seen them judge to be as great as any work of art that has ever been achieved.

XXVI. And to give some idea of it, I will briefly say that the tomb was to have four faces ; two of eighteen cubits, for the sides, and two of twelve, for the ends, so that it formed a square and a half. Around on the outside were niches in which statues were to be placed, and between each niche terminal busts, in front of which on projecting cubes, which rested on the ground, were other statues, bound like prisoners, representing the liberal arts and likewise painting, sculpture, and architecture, each with its symbols, so that it could easily be recognised ; signifying by this that, together with Pope Giulio, all the arts were prisoners of Death, since they were never likely to find anyone who would befriend and foster them, as he had done. Above these ran a cornice binding the whole work together, and supporting four

large statues, one of which, namely the Moses, may be seen in San Piero ad Vincula; and of it we will speak in its own place. The monument, ascending in this manner, ended in a flat surface, on which were two angels supporting an urn: one of them had a smiling countenance, as though he were rejoicing that the soul of the Pope had been received among the blessed spirits: the other was weeping, like one who grieved that the world had been deprived of such a man. At one of the extremities, namely, the one which formed the head of the tomb, there was an entrance into a little room in the interior, in the form of a temple; and in the midst of this was a marble chest in which the body of the Pope was to be placed: every detail being wrought with marvellous art. In short, in the whole work there were more than forty statues, besides the bronze histories worked in mezzo-rilievo, all having reference to the subject, and showing the deeds of so great a Pope.

XXVII. Having seen this design, the Pope sent Michelangelo to San Pietro to see where it could conveniently be placed. The church in those days was in the form of a cross, at the head of which Pope Niccola V. had begun to build a new tribune; and it had already reached the height of three cubits above the ground, when he died. It appeared to Michelangelo that this place was very suitable, and returning to the Pope, he told him his opinion, adding that, if His Holiness thought the same, it would be necessary to complete the building and cover it in. The Pope asked, "What would this cost?" To which Michelangelo replied: "A hundred thousand scudi." "Make it two hundred thousand," said Giulio. And having sent San Gallo, the architect, and Bramante to see the place, under their influence the Pope con-

ceived the desire of building the whole church anew. And when he had caused many designs to be prepared, that of Bramante was chosen, as being more beautiful and better conceived than the others. Thus it came about that Michelangelo was the cause, not only of that part of the building being finished which had already been begun (for otherwise it would probably be as it was to this day), but also of the Pope's conceiving the desire of re-building the rest of the church, with a new and more beautiful and grander design.

XXVIII. To return now to our narrative. Michelangelo was made aware of the Pope's change of mind in the following manner. The Pope had directed Michelangelo, if he should be in need of money, to apply to no one else but himself, in order that he should not have to go about from one to another. It happened one day that the rest of the marbles, which had been left at Carrara, arrived at the Ripa. Michelangelo having had them put on shore and carried to San Piero, wishing to pay the freightage, the unloading and the men's charges, came to ask the Pope for some money: but he found access to him more difficult than usual, and was informed that the Pope was occupied. Returning home, in order that those poor men who were to have the money should not be distressed, he paid them all out of his own pocket, expecting to get back the amount, as he could easily have it from the Pope. Another morning, having gone to obtain audience of the Pope, and entering the ante-chamber, behold a groom approached him, saying, "Pardon me, but I have orders not to allow you to enter." A bishop was present, who hearing what the groom said, reproved him, saying, "You cannot know who this man is." "Nay, I know him," replied the groom, "but I am obliged to do what I am ordered by my masters,

. without seeking the reason." Michelangelo (to whom hitherto no door had ever been closed, nor entrance barred), seeing himself thus baffled, indignant at the occurrence, replied, "Tell the Pope, that henceforward if he wishes to see me, he must seek me elsewhere." Then returning home, he directed his two servants to sell all the furniture that was in his house, and taking the money to follow him to Florence. He himself, taking the post, arrived two hours after nightfall at Poggibonsi, a town in the territory of Florence, eighteen or twenty miles distant from the city. There, as being in a place of safety, he rested.

XXIX. Soon after he was overtaken by five messengers from Giulio, who had commissioned them to bring him back, wherever they found him. But, as he had arrived in a place where they could use no violence, Michelangelo threatening them with death if they attempted anything against him, they had recourse to entreaty, and this availing them nothing, they obtained from him a promise that he would at least reply to the letter of the Pope, which they had delivered to him, and that he would particularly explain that they had not overtaken him till he was in Florentine territory: so that he should understand that they had not been able to bring him back against his will. The Pope's letter was of the following tenor: "That on receipt of this, Michelangelo should return at once to Rome under pain of his displeasure." To which Michelangelo shortly replied: "That he was resolved never to go back; that his good and faithful service had not merited such a return as to be driven from his presence like a villain; and since His Holiness would no longer attend to the tomb, his obligation in that matter was discharged, nor would he enter into any other." So, the letter being dated, as has been said, and the

messengers despatched, he went on to Florence, where, in the course of three months, during which he remained there, three briefs were sent by the Pope to the Signoria, full of threats, directing them to send him back, either by persuasion or by force.

XXX. Pier Soderini, who at that time was Gonfaloniere for life of the Republic of Florence, having formerly let him go to Rome against his wish, as he had intended to make use of his services in painting the hall of the Great Council, on receipt of the first brief, did not compel Michelangelo to return, expecting that the anger of the Pope would pass; but when the second came, and the third, he summoned Michelangelo, and said to him: "You have tried a fall with the Pope, on which a king of France would not have ventured. There is no more question of entreaty. We do not wish to make war with him on your account, and put our State in peril. So make ready to return." Michelangelo, seeing the pass to which he was brought, and fearing the anger of the Pope, thought of going to the East, chiefly because the Turk, through certain Franciscan friars, had requested him with large promises to give his services in the building of a bridge from Constantinople to Pera, and in other matters. But the Gonfaloniere, hearing of this, sent for him, and diverted him from such an idea, saying: "That he should rather choose to go to the Pope and die, than to go to the Turk and live; nevertheless, that he need have no fear of this, since the Pope was friendly, and called him back because he wished him well, not to do him any harm: if, however, he was afraid, that the Signoria would send him with the title of Ambassador, since violence done to persons holding public office is held to be done to those who send them." Persuaded by these and

other arguments Michelangelo made up his mind to return.

XXXI. But during the time that he remained in Florence two things took place: the first was that he completed that wonderful cartoon which he had begun for the hall of the Great Council, in which was represented the war between Florence and Pisa, and the many and various incidents that occurred therein: from which most ingenious cartoon all those who afterwards handled a paint-brush gained light and instruction. Nor do I know by what misfortune it came to an evil end, having been left by Michelangelo in the Sala del Papa, a place so-called in Santa Maria Novella at Florence. Pieces of it, indeed, are to be seen in various places, preserved with the greatest care and like something sacred. The other thing that occurred was that Pope Giulio, having taken Bologna, had repaired thither, and was filled with joy by this acquisition, which gave courage to Michelangelo, so that he went into his presence with better hope.

XXXII. Michelangelo, arriving then one morning in Bologna, and going to hear mass in San Petronio, behold, there were the Pope's grooms, and they, recognising him, conducted him into the presence of His Holiness, who was at table in the palace of the Sixteen. And he, when he saw him enter his presence, said with an angry countenance: "You ought to have sought Us, and you have waited for Us to seek you." Meaning that, His Holiness having come to Bologna, a place much nearer to Florence than Rome is, he had, as it were, come to find him. Michelangelo, kneeling down, in a loud voice asked pardon, excusing himself by saying that he had erred not from ill-intent, but from indignation, as he could not endure to be driven away as he had been. The Pope remained with his head bent,

making no reply, his countenance greatly disturbed: when the Cardinal Soderini, in order to excuse and support Michelangelo, interposed and said: "Let not your Holiness regard his error, since he has erred through ignorance. Painters, except in as far as their art is concerned, are all like this." To which the Pope replied indignantly: "It is you yourself, not we, that affront him—it is you, not he, that are ignorant and a villain. Out of my presence, with a murrain on you!" And since he did not go, he was driven forth by the servants of the Pope, as Michelangelo is wont to say, with violent blows. Thus the Pope, having vented the worst of his anger upon the Bishop, calling Michelangelo to come nearer, pardoned him, and directed him not to leave Bologna until he should give him another commission. Nor did he wait long before the Pope sent for him, and said: "That he wished him to make a bronze statue of himself, of great size, to be placed in front of the church of San Petronio." And having left for this purpose a thousand ducats in the bank of Messer Anton-Maria da Legnano, he returned to Rome. Michelangelo had indeed already made it in clay before he left, and doubting what he ought to do with the left hand, having made the right in the act of giving benediction, he asked the Pope, who had come to see the statue, whether he would like him to place a book in the other. "A book," replied he, "nay rather, a sword: since, for my part, I cannot read." And jesting about the right hand, which was raised with a gesture of energy, he said smiling to Michelangelo, "Is this statue of yours giving benediction or malediction?" To which Michelangelo replied, "Holy Father, it is threatening this people, if they are not wise." But, as I have said, Pope Giulio having returned to Rome, Michelangelo remained in Bologna. And in com-

pleting the statue, and placing it where the Pope had directed him, he spent sixteen months. This statue, when the Bentivogli afterwards returned to Bologna, was overthrown and destroyed by the fury of the populace. It was more than three times as large as life.

XXXIII. When he had finished this work he went to Rome: where Pope Giulio, wishing to make use of his services, and yet maintaining his resolve that the tomb should not be made, was induced by Bramante and others who were envious of Michelangelo, to make him paint the roof of the chapel of Pope Sisto the Fourth, which is in the palace, they declaring that in such a work he would do marvels. And they played this part from malice, in order to divert the Pope's mind from sculpture; and because they held it for certain that either by not accepting the commission, he would incur the enmity of the Pope, or, accepting it, he would succeed less well than Raffaello da Urbino, to whom, through hatred of Michelangelo, they gave all their support: for they thought (which indeed was the truth) that the art in which Michelangelo most excelled was sculpture. Michelangelo, who up to that time had not worked in colour, and knew that to paint a vault was a difficult thing, tried by all means in his power to get rid of the commission, proposing Raffaello in his stead, and excusing himself by saying that painting was not his art, and that he should not succeed. And he so persisted in his refusal that the Pope almost flew into a passion. And so Michelangelo, seeing the Pope's determination, set himself to accomplish that work, which now in the Pope's palace is beheld with admiration and wonder by the whole world; and which gained him so great a reputation that it placed him above the reach of envy: of which work I will now give a short account.

XXXIV. The form of the vault, to use a common expression, is that of a cask; and it springs from lunettes, of which there are six at each side, and two at each end, so that the whole consists of two squares and a half. In this the chief subject which Michelangelo has depicted is the Creation of the World, but he has also included almost the whole of the Old Testament; and he has divided the work in the following manner. [Beginning from the corbels, on which the horns of the lunettes rest, up to about a third of the arch of the vault, he represents, as it were, a flat wall, bringing up to this point pilasters and plinths, painted to resemble marble, which jut out like a hill from a plain, with their corbels below, and with other small pilasters, projecting outward from the same wall, where prophets and sybils appear seated.] The first pilasters, springing from the arches of the lunettes, have their corbels about half-way up, the larger part of the arch being disregarded, because lower down there is not sufficient space between arch and arch. [On the said plinths are represented little nude boys, in various attitudes, who, like terminal statues, support a cornice, which runs round the whole work, leaving the centre of the vault from end to end like an open sky. This open roof is divided into nine parts; for from the cornice above the pilasters spring ribbed arches which cross the highest part of the vault, and meet the cornice on the opposite side, leaving between them nine empty spaces, a larger and a smaller alternately. The smaller are divided into three parts by narrow strips of marble so arranged that the middle space is twice as great as those at the sides, where are placed the medallions, of which mention will be made later. And this he has done, in order to avoid the satiety caused by sameness. In the first space then, at the upper end, which is a smaller one, God

Almighty is represented dividing the light from the darkness with a movement of His arms. In the second He is creating the two greater lights, and stands with His arms spread wide, pointing with His right to the sun and with His left to the moon. He is accompanied by several little angels, one of whom on the left side is hiding his face, and shrinking towards his Creator, as though afraid that the moon would hurt him. In the same space, on the left side, God is also represented creating herbs and plants on the earth, and is painted with such skill, that, whichever way one turns, He appears to follow one, showing the whole of His back down to the soles of His feet: a very beautiful thing, and one which proves what fore-shortening can do. In the third space the Lord God appears as before with angels, and looking on the waters commands them to bring forth the different kinds of animals which are nourished by that element, just as in the second space he commanded the earth. In the fourth is represented the creation of man; and here God is seen with His hand and arm stretched out, as though He were giving command to Adam concerning what he should and what he should not do; and with the other arm He is gathering His little angels together. In the fifth He is drawing the woman from Adam's ribs, and she coming forth with her hands joined and outstretched to God, and bending with a beautiful gesture, appears to thank Him, while He blesses her. In the sixth the devil, who, from the middle upwards, has a human form, and for the rest that of a serpent, the legs being transformed into a tail, is twisting himself around a tree; and he seems to be reasoning with the man, inducing him to disobey his Creator, and holds forth to the woman the forbidden apple. And in the other part of this space both are seen, driven out by the angel, fleeing in fear and grief

from the face of God. In the seventh are the sacrifices of Abel and of Cain : the former pleasing and acceptable to God ; the latter hateful and rejected. In the eighth is the Deluge, in which the Ark of Noah is seen afar off in the midst of the waters, with figures of men and women clinging to it for safety. Nearer, in the same ocean, is a ship crowded with all kinds of people, which, partly through being over-weighted, partly from the continuous and violent agitation of the waves, its sail lost, and cut off from all human aid or means of escape, is already filling with water, and sinking ; and here it is a wonderful thing to behold the human race perishing thus miserably in the waves. Also, nearer to the eye, appears above the waters the top of a mountain, which resembles an island : where, escaping from the rising waves, are gathered together a multitude of men and women, expressing many different emotions, but all full of fear and distress ; and these are crowding together under an awning, which is suspended from a tree, in order to protect themselves from the unwonted downfall of rain : and above is represented with great skill the wrath of God, which is poured forth upon them with rain, lightnings, and thunder-bolts. Somewhat nearer still, on the right hand, is the summit of another mountain, and a multitude overwhelmed by the same calamity, concerning whom it would be a tedious task to give every particular : it is enough to say that they are all true to nature, and terrible to see, as in such a disaster may well be imagined. In the ninth space, which is the last, is the story of Noah ; when, drunk and lying naked on the ground, he is mocked by his son Cain, but Shem and Japheth place a covering over him. Under the cornice above mentioned, which terminates the wall, and above the corbels, from which the lunettes spring, between the pilasters are

seated twelve figures of Prophets and Sybils, all truly marvellous, both in their attitudes and in the beauty and variety of their apparel. But most marvellous of all is the prophet Jonah, who is placed at the upper end of the vault: inasmuch as, contrary to the structure of the vault and by means of light and shade, the torso, which is shortened in perspective, is in that part of the wall which is nearer to the eye, and the legs, which appear to stretch out in front of the torso, are in the more distant part. A wonderful achievement, and one which shows what knowledge this man possesses of the method of drawing lines in foreshortening and perspective. Then in the space below the lunettes, and also in the triangular space above, there is depicted the whole genealogy, or rather the ancestors of the Saviour: except in the corner triangles, which, being joined together, make one out of two, so that there the space is twice as great. In one of these, next to the wall of the Last Judgment, on the right hand, Haman is seen suspended on a cross by command of the King Ahasuerus; and this because he desired, in his pride and insolence, to cause Mordecai, the uncle of Esther the Queen, to be hung, as a penalty for not paying him honour and reverence as he passed by. In another is the story of the serpent of brass, raised up by Moses on a pole: so that, if the people of Israel, who were smitten and afflicted by living serpents, looked on it, they were healed: and here Michelangelo has shown marvellous skill in the figures of those who are trying to shake off the snakes. In the third corner, at the lower end of the vault, is the vengeance wrought by Judith upon Holofernes: in the fourth, the victory of David over Goliath. And this is briefly the whole history.

XXXV. But not less wonderful than this is the

part which does not belong to the history. This consists of certain nude figures, which, seated on plinths above the cornice before mentioned, support, one on one side and one on the other, medallions painted to resemble metal, on which, as on the reverse side of a medal, are depicted various histories, all, however, having reference to the principal subject. In all these, by the beauty of the arrangement, by the diversity of the attitudes, and the contrast in the situations, Michelangelo showed the greatest possible art. But to give the particulars of these things and of all the rest would be an endless work, nor would one volume suffice for it: I have therefore briefly touched upon them, desiring to throw a little light upon the matter, rather than to specify all the details.

XXXVI. Meanwhile difficulties were not wanting, inasmuch as, when he had begun the work, and had painted the picture of the Deluge, the painting began to turn mouldy, so that the figures could hardly be discerned. So Michelangelo, thinking that this excuse would suffice to relieve him of the task, went to the Pope and said: "I told Your Holiness that painting was not my art. What I have done is ruined: if you do not believe it, send some one to see." The Pope sent San Gallo, and he, examining it, perceived that the lime had been made too watery, and that the moisture oozing through had produced this effect: and having informed Michelangelo of the reason, he directed him to continue the work; nor was excuse of any avail.

XXXVII. While he was painting, Pope Giulio would often go and see the work, ascending by a ladder, while Michelangelo reached out his hand to assist him in mounting on to the scaffold. And being by nature vehement and impatient of delay, when the

half was done, that is to say, from the door to the middle of the vault,¹ he desired him to uncover it, although it was imperfect and had not yet received the last touches. Michelangelo's reputation and the expectation aroused concerning the frescoes, drew the whole of Rome to see the painting ; the Pope himself coming also, before the dust, which was raised by the taking down of the scaffold, had settled.

XXXVIII. After this, Raffaello having seen the new and marvellous manner of the work, gifted as he was with a wonderful power of imitation, sought by means of Bramante to be commissioned to paint the rest. This greatly disturbed Michelangelo, and seeking Pope Giulio, he complained bitterly of the injury which Bramante was doing him : and in his own presence showed the Pope the persecutions he had suffered from him : and then pointed out many of Bramante's own errors, and especially that in the pulling down of old San Pietro he had thrown to the ground the wonderful columns that were in that church, taking no heed nor considering that they would fall in pieces ; when, by letting them down gently, he might have preserved them intact : and he pointed out that it was an easy thing to put brick upon brick, but that to make such a column as that was most difficult : and many other things, which it is not necessary to relate : insomuch that the Pope, when he had heard of these evil doings, desired Michelangelo to proceed with the work, conferring on him more favours than

¹ *N.B.* —The part uncovered was the whole central space, comprising the scenes from Genesis, which would have the appearance of a complete work. This fact modifies the courtesy of the request of Raffaello, related in the next paragraph (see J. A. Symonds' "Life of Michelangelo," vol. i. p. 211).

he had ever done before. He finished the whole of this work in twenty months, having had no assistance whatever, even in grinding the colours. It is true that I have heard him say that it was not finished as he would have wished, owing to the impatience of the Pope: who asking one day when he would finish the chapel, and Michelangelo replying, "When I can," rejoined angrily: "Do you wish me to throw you down from your scaffolding?" and Michelangelo, hearing it, said to himself, "Throw me down you shall not." And he went and had the scaffolding taken down, and he uncovered the work on All Saints' Day: which was seen with great satisfaction by the Pope (for he said Mass that day in the chapel), and with admiration by the whole of Rome, who crowded to behold it. It yet remained to touch it up with ultramarine on dry ground, and in some places with gold, that it might appear more rich: and Giulio, his vehemence having passed, wished Michelangelo to complete it; but he, thinking of the trouble he would have in putting up the scaffolding again, replied that what was wanting was not of much importance. "It ought at any rate to be touched up with gold," said the Pope: to which Michelangelo, with the familiarity he was wont to use towards His Holiness, replied, "I do not see men wearing gold"; and the Pope said, "It will look poor." "Those who are there represented," replied Michelangelo, "were poor themselves." Thus they bandied jests together, and the frescoes were left as they were. Michelangelo had for his whole expenses in this work three thousand ducats, of which he had to spend in colours, as I have heard him say, about twenty or twenty-five.

XXXIX. When this work was finished, Michelangelo, through having painted for so long a time

with his eyes raised towards the roof, when he looked down, could see very little; so that, if he had to read a letter, or anything else that was small, he was obliged to hold it at arm's length over his head. However, he afterwards became by degrees used to reading again looking downwards. From this we may understand with what close attention and assiduity he accomplished that work. Many other things happened to him during the life of Pope Giulio, who loved him excessively, and cared more jealously for him than for anyone else who was near him, which may be seen clearly enough from what we have already written. Once even, fearing that he was angry, he hastily sent him a message of conciliation. The thing occurred in this way: Michelangelo, wishing to go to Florence for the festival of San Giovanni, asked the Pope for money; and he inquiring when he would finish the chapel, Michelangelo, as usual, replied, "When I can." And the Pope, who was hasty by nature, struck him with a staff, which he held in his hand, saying, "When I can! when I can!" and Michelangelo, returning home, made preparations to go without more ado to Florence: when there arrived Accursio, a youth who was in much favour with the Pope, who had sent him with five hundred ducats, and with directions to appease Michelangelo as best he could, and excuse the Pope. Michelangelo, having accepted the excuse, departed to Florence. Thus it seemed as if Giulio cared for nothing else so much as to keep this man in his service: nor did he wish to make use of him in life only, but also after he was dead: insomuch that, when he drew near to death, he gave directions that Michelangelo should be commissioned to finish the tomb which

he had begun, laying this charge upon Cardinal Santi Quattro the elder, and upon his nephew Cardinal Aginense; and they accordingly directed Michelangelo to prepare a new design, as they thought that the first was too large. Thus Michelangelo entered for the second time upon the tragedy of the tomb, which turned out no better for him than before, nay, far worse, involving him in endless trouble, vexation, and labour; and what is worse, through the malice of certain persons, in discredit, from which he with difficulty cleared himself after many years. Michelangelo, therefore, began again to get the work in hand, bringing many sculptors from Florence; and Bernardo Bini, who was trustee, supplied money as it was needed. But he had not gone far with it, when to his great vexation he was stopped, for Pope Leo, the successor of Giulio, conceived the desire of ornamenting the façade of San Lorenzo at Florence with marble sculptures and carvings. This church was built by the great Cosimo de' Medici, and, except for the façade, was quite finished. Pope Leo then proposing to complete this part, thought he would employ Michelangelo, and sending for him, directed him to make a design; and finally desired that he would come to Florence for this purpose, and take on himself the whole responsibility of the work. Michelangelo, who had with great zeal begun the tomb of Giulio, resisted as long as he could, alleging that he was bound to the Cardinals Santi Quattro and Aginense, and must not fail them. But the Pope, whose resolution was fixed, replied, "Leave me to deal with them; I will satisfy them." So having sent for them both, he caused them to set Michelangelo free, to the greatest grief, both of himself and of the Cardinals, especially

of Aginense, nephew, as he was called, of Pope Giulio: Pope Leo therefore promised them that Michelangelo should work at the tomb in Florence, and that he would not hinder him. Thus Michelangelo, grieving, left the tomb, and went to Florence; and having arrived there, and put in order all things necessary for the façade, he went to Carrara to obtain marbles, not only for the façade, but also for the tomb, believing, as the Pope had promised, that he would be able to go on with it. In the meanwhile information was sent to Pope Leo that in the mountains of Pietrasanta, a little town in Florentine territory, were marbles of equal beauty and excellence with those in Carrara, and that when this had been spoken of to Michelangelo, he, on account of his friendship with the Marchese Alberigo, and of an understanding he had with him, had preferred rather to procure Carrara marbles than these others which were in the Florentine State. The Pope wrote to Michelangelo, ordering him to go to Pietrasanta, and to see whether it was as the writer of the letter from Florence had said. And he, having gone thither, found marbles difficult to work, and unsuitable for sculpture; and even if they had been suitable, it would be a matter of great trouble and expense to bring them down to the coast, because it would be necessary to make a road of several miles through the mountains by means of pick-axes, and in the plain with piles, as the district was marshy. And when Michelangelo wrote this to the Pope, he gave more credence to those who had written to him from Florence than to him, and ordered him to make the road. So putting into execution the will of the Pope, he had the road made, and had a great quantity of marbles brought by it to the coast: among which were five columns of the right size, one of

which may be seen on the piazza of San Lorenzo, for Michelangelo caused it to be brought to Florence ; the other four, in consequence of the Pope having changed his mind, and turned his thoughts elsewhere, are still lying on the beach. But the Marchese di Carrara, thinking that Michelangelo, through being a citizen of Florence, had originated the plan of getting marbles from Pietrasanta, became his enemy ; nor would he allow him to return to Carrara for certain marbles which he had hewn there, and which were a great loss to Michelangelo.

XL. He having now returned to Florence, and having found, as has been already said, that Pope Leo's zeal had completely died out, sorrowfully remained a long time without doing anything, having already, in one way or another, lost much time, to his own great vexation. Nevertheless, with certain marbles which he had, he set himself to go on with the tomb in his own house. But when Leo was dead, and Adriano had been elected Pope, he was compelled once more to abandon the work : for they charged him with having received from Giulio for this work fully sixteen thousand scudi, while he took no trouble to carry it out, but remained in Florence for his own pleasure. And being called to Rome on this account, the Cardinal de' Medici, who was afterwards Clemente VII., and who at that time had the Government of Florence in his hands, refused to let him go, and in order to keep him occupied and have some excuse, he set him to design the library of the Medici in San Lorenzo, and at the same time the sacristy with the tombs of his ancestors, promising to satisfy the Pope and settle matters for him. Thus, as Adriano lived only a few months after he was made Pope, and Clemente succeeded him, for some time not a word was spoken about the

tomb of Giulio. But Michelangelo, being advised that the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria, nephew of Pope Giulio of blessed memory, complained greatly of him, and even added threats, came to Rome: where he discussed the matter with Pope Clemente, who counselled him to have the agents of the Duke summoned, and to give them an account of all that he had received from Giulio, and of what he had done for him, knowing that if an estimate were made of his losses and gains, Michelangelo would remain creditor rather than debtor. Michelangelo remained unwillingly in Rome for this purpose, and having set some of his affairs in order, returned to Florence, principally because he feared that disaster which shortly afterwards fell upon Rome.

XLI. Meanwhile the family of the Medici was banished from Florence by the opposite faction, for having exercised more authority than a free city can submit to, or than may be reconciled with republican principles. And since the Signoria did not doubt but that the Pope would do all in his power to restore them, and regarded war as a certainty, they turned their attention to fortifying the city: and over this work they made Michelangelo commissary general. He, therefore, being appointed to superintend the matter, besides taking many other measures for the security of the whole city, surrounded the hill of San Miniato, which stands high and commands the country around, with excellent fortifications: for if the enemy were to obtain possession of this hill, there is no doubt that the city also would fall into their hands. This foresight then was the salvation of Florence, and the cause of great loss to the enemy, inasmuch as the hill being high, as I have said, much molestation was caused to the besiegers, especially from the campanile of the

church, where were two pieces of artillery, which continued incessantly to do great damage to the camp outside. Michelangelo, although he had made this provision, nevertheless, to be ready for any emergency, remained on this hill. And when he had been there about six months, there began to arise murmurs of treason among the soldiers of the city: and Michelangelo, being partly aware of this himself, partly being warned by certain captains who were his friends, went to the Signoria, showing them that which he had heard and seen: pointing out to them the danger in which the city stood, and saying that there was yet time to provide against it if they would. But instead of returning him thanks, they replied to him with insults, blaming him for timidity and too great suspicion. And he who answered Michelangelo in this manner would have done much better to attend to what he said, inasmuch as, when the Medici entered Florence, his head was cut off, when otherwise he might perhaps have been still alive.

XLII. Michelangelo, seeing that they made light of his words, and that the destruction of the city was certain, making use of the authority he possessed, caused one of the gates to be opened, and departed with two of his friends and made his way to Venice. And certainly the treachery was no idle story, but he who planned it thought that he would incur less infamy if, without then discovering himself, he were to bring about the same result, in course of time, simply by neglecting his own duty, and hindering others from performing theirs. The departure of Michelangelo was much talked of in Florence, and brought him into very ill odour with those in authority. None the less they most earnestly entreated him to return, urging that his country had need of him; that he ought not to abandon

the task he had taken upon himself; that things were not in the extremity which he had allowed himself to think; and many other things: till, persuaded by these arguments, and by the authority of the persons who wrote, but more than all by love of his country, and having received a safe conduct for ten days from the day on which he arrived in Florence, he returned, but not without peril to his life.

XLIII. Reaching Florence, the first thing that he did was to have the campanile of San Miniato protected, as it was much injured by the continual attacks of the enemy's artillery, and there was danger that it might fall down in course of time, and cause much injury to those within. His method of protecting it was as follows: taking a large number of very thick woollen mattresses, he let them down by night with strong cords from the top of the tower to the bottom, covering that part which was exposed to the enemy. And as the cornices of the tower projected outwards, the mattresses hung out at a distance of more than six palms from the main wall of the campanile, in such a way that, when the cannon-balls struck the tower, partly owing to the distance from which they were sent, partly to the obstruction caused by the mattresses, they effected little or no damage, not even injuring the mattresses themselves, because they offered no resistance. Thus he defended the tower during the whole time of the war, which lasted a year, so that it suffered no injury: and by this means greatly assisted both in preserving the city and in inflicting damage on the enemy.

XLIV. Afterwards, however, the enemy having come to terms and entered the city, and many of the citizens being seized and put to death, the officers were sent to the house of Michelangelo to take him:

and the rooms and all the cupboards, and even the chimney, were searched. But Michelangelo, fearing this very thing, had taken refuge in the house of a great friend of his, and remaining concealed there many days, while no one except his friend knew that he was in that house, he escaped: for when the Pope's anger had passed, he wrote to Florence, directing that search should be made for Michelangelo, and that, when he was found, if he was willing to go on with the work of the tomb, which he had already begun, he should be allowed his liberty, and be courteously treated. And learning this, Michelangelo came out; and although it was about fifteen years since he had touched a hammer,¹ he set himself to the work with so much zeal, that in a few months he made all those statues which are to be seen in the sacristy of San Lorenzo, urged more by fear than by love. It is true that none of them has received the last touch; they are, however, so far finished that one can very well see the excellence of the artist: nor does the roughness detract from the perfection and beauty of the work.

XLV. The statues are four, placed in a sacristy, made for this purpose, on the left side of the church, opposite the old sacristy: and although the whole work was of one character and of one form, nevertheless the figures are all different, and have different gestures and attitudes. The tombs are placed against the side walls, and on each of them he made two recumbent figures, larger than life, a man and a woman, signifying by these Day and Night, and by both together Time that consumes all. And in order that the intention should be better understood, he gave Night, who is made in the form of a woman of

¹ *N.B.*—Evidently an exaggeration.

marvellous beauty, the owl and other suitable symbols: so also he gave Day his own characteristics: and to represent Time, he intended to make a mouse, and left in the work a small piece of marble for the purpose (but afterwards he did not make it, being prevented), because this little animal continually gnaws and consumes, just as Time also devours everything. Then there are other statues, which represent those for whom the tombs were made, all in a word more divine than human: but above all a Madonna with her child astride on her knee, concerning which I think it better to be silent than to say only a little; therefore I pass it over. These statues we owe to Pope Clemente, a benefit which, if he had done no other praiseworthy thing in his life (though indeed he did many) would have been sufficient to cancel every fault, since through him the world possesses so noble a work. And far more do we owe him, in that he had as much regard for the greatness of Michelangelo, in the capture of Florence, as Marcellus had, when he took Syracuse, for that of Archimedes: the good will of the latter had indeed no effect, but that of the former, thanks be to God, prevailed.

XLVI. In spite of all, however, Michelangelo remained in great fear, because Duke Alessandro regarded him with bitter hatred; being a young man, as every one knows, of fierce and vindictive disposition. Nor is there any doubt that, had it not been for the Pope, he would have got rid of him: and all the more because, when the Duke of Florence was desirous of building that fortress which he made, and had sent for Michelangelo, by means of Signor Alessandro Vitelli, that he might ride with him to see where it could conveniently be built, Michelangelo refused to go, replying that he had no such commission from Pope Clemente.

And at this the Duke was exceedingly angry ; so that what with this new offence, and his former ill-will, and the character of the Duke, Michelangelo had good reason for fear. And certainly it was by the blessing of God that he did not happen to be in Florence at the time of the death of Clemente : for before he had well finished the tombs, he was summoned to Rome by that Pontiff, and by him welcomed with joy. Clemente regarded this man as something sacred, and discoursed with him, both about serious and about trivial things, with the same familiarity that he would have done with an equal. He sought to relieve him from further obligation in regard to the tomb of Giulio, in order that he might remain permanently in Florence : and might not only finish the things he had begun, but also produce other works as great as they.

XLVII. But before I discourse further concerning this, it is necessary to write of another circumstance in the life of Michelangelo, which by inadvertence I had omitted. This is, that after the Medici had been driven out of Florence, the Signoria fearing, as has been said above, that war would follow, and intending to fortify the city, although they knew Michelangelo to possess the greatest genius, and to be most apt for the work, nevertheless, through the advice of certain citizens, who favoured the Medici, and desired craftily to hinder or defer the fortification of the city, resolved to send him to Ferrara, pretending that they desired him to study the manner in which the Duke Alfonso had strengthened and fortified his own city, knowing that His Excellency was in this matter most skilful, as well as wise in all other things. The Duke received Michelangelo most joyfully, both on account of the greatness of the man, and because Don Ercole, his son, now Duke of that State, was Captain of the

Signoria of Florence: and riding with him in person, there was nothing that was necessary to his purpose which he did not show him, both in regard to fortifications and to artillery. He also took him into his private cabinet, showing him everything with his own hand: especially some works in painting and portraits of his own ancestors, by the hand of masters that were excellent according to the standard of their time. And when Michelangelo was about to depart, the Duke jesting said to him: "Michelangelo, you are my prisoner. If you wish me to set you free, you must promise to make me something with your own hand, as the fancy strikes you: be it what it will, sculpture or painting." Michelangelo promised: and when he returned to Florence, although he was much taken up with the fortifications of the city, nevertheless he began a large easel picture representing the union of Leda and the Swan: and therewith also the bringing forth of the eggs from which sprang Castor and Pollux, according as it may be read in the stories of the ancients. And the Duke knowing this, when he heard that the Medici had entered Florence, fearing that so great a treasure might be lost in the tumult, at once sent thither one of his attendants: who, coming to the house of Michelangelo, and seeing the picture, said: "That is no great thing." And Michelangelo having asked him what his profession was (knowing that every one judges best of that art which he himself practises) he replied smiling: "I am a merchant:" perhaps because he was annoyed at being asked such a question, and at not having been recognised for a gentleman; and at the same time despising the industry of the Florentine citizens, who for the most part devote themselves to mercantile affairs: as though he had said: "You inquire what is my profession? Could

you possibly take me for a merchant?" Michelangelo, who understood the gentleman's meaning, said: "You manage your master's business badly; away with you." Having thus dismissed the messenger of the Duke, he gave the picture a short time afterwards to one of his servants, who, having two sisters to portion, had asked for his assistance. It was sent into France, and bought by King Francis; and there it still remains.

XLVIII. Now to return to the point at which I left the narrative. Michelangelo being summoned by Pope Clemente to Rome, the agents of the Duke of Urbino began to harrass him concerning the tomb of Giulio; Clemente, who wished to employ him in Florence, sought by all means to free him from his obligation towards them, and gave him for his attorney one Messer Tommaso da Prato, who was afterwards datary. But Michelangelo, who knew the ill-will which the Duke Alessandro cherished towards him, and stood in great fear thereof: and who also bore love and reverence towards the bones of Pope Giulio and towards the most illustrious house of Della Rovere, did all he could to remain in Rome, and work at the tomb: the more that he was everywhere accused of having received from Pope Giulio for this purpose, as has been said, quite sixteen thousand scudi, and of having enjoyed the money without doing that which he was bound to do in return: and being unable to endure this infamy, for he was tender of his honour, he desired that the matter should be cleared up, not refusing, though he was already old, the very heavy task of finishing that which he had begun. When the case was tried, the opponents not showing payments which reached a fraction of the sum about which there had been so much outcry—in fact, more than two-

thirds were wanting to the amount the two Cardinals had originally agreed to pay—Clemente, thinking that it was an excellent opportunity of settling the matter in such a way that he could make free use of Michelangelo's services, sent for him and said, “Come, say that you are willing to make the tomb, but that you would like to know who will pay you the rest of the money.” Michelangelo, who knew it was the Pope's wish to employ him in his own service, replied: “And if some one is found to pay me?” And Pope Clemente rejoined: “You are mad if you suppose that any one will come forward to offer you a farthing.” So Messer Tommaso, his attorney, having appeared in court and made sundry propositions to the agents of the Duke, they began to approach each other, and agreed together that he ought at any rate to make a tomb for the money he had received. Michelangelo, thinking that the thing was brought to a good conclusion, willingly consented, being specially urged thereto by the authority of the elder Cardinal di Monte, a creature of Giulio II. and uncle of Giulio III. (at the present time our pontiff by the grace of God), for the Cardinal helped to arrange the matter. The agreement was as follows: that Michelangelo should make a tomb with one front, and should use those marbles which he had already blocked out for the quadrangular tomb, adapting them as best he could: and that he should be bound to place on it six statues from his own hand. It was nevertheless conceded to Pope Clemente that he might employ Michelangelo in Florence, or wherever he wished, four months in the year, His Holiness making this request on account of the works in Florence. Such was the contract made between His Excellency the Duke and Michelangelo.

XLIX. But now be it known that, after all the

accounts were made up, Michelangelo, in order that he might appear more bound to the Duke of Urbino, and that Pope Clemente might feel less confidence in sending him to Florence (whither he wished by no means to go) made a secret agreement with the messenger and agent of His Excellency, that it should be said that he had received some thousand scudi more than he had really had. This, however, being done not only in words, but without his knowledge and consent being inserted in the agreement (not when it was drawn up, but when it was engrossed) he was much disturbed. However, the agent persuaded him that this would do him no injury: for it mattered little whether the contract specified twenty thousand scudi, or one thousand, since they had agreed that the tomb should be made on a smaller scale according to the amount of money really received: adding that it was no one's business to inquire into the matter except his own, and that as far as he was concerned Michelangelo was secure, on account of the understanding between them. Upon which Michelangelo was reassured, both because there seemed to be no great risk, and because he wished this pretext to serve the purpose with the Pope which has been mentioned above. And thus the matter was allowed to pass for the time, but it was not yet ended, for after he had served the four months in Florence and had returned to Rome, the Pope sought to employ him in another way, namely, in painting the end wall of the Sistine Chapel. And being a man of excellent judgment, when he had thought the matter over in every way, he finally resolved to make him paint the Day of the Last Judgment, thinking that the variety and grandeur of the subject would give him the opportunity of proving his powers to the utmost. Michelangelo, knowing

the obligation under which he stood to the Duke of Urbino, did all he could to avoid this thing: but since he could not get rid of it altogether, he protracted the work as much as possible: and pretending to be occupied, as he was in part, with the cartoon, he secretly worked at the statues which were to be placed on the tomb.

L. In the meantime Pope Clemente died, and Paolo III. was elected Pope; and he sent for Michelangelo and requested that he would enter his service. Michelangelo, who feared that he would be stopped in his work, replied that he was unable to do so, as he was bound by contract to the Duke of Urbino, until he had finished the work which he had in hand. The Pope was much disturbed, and said: "For thirty years I have had this wish, and now that I am Pope can I not obtain it? Where is this contract? I will tear it up." Michelangelo, seeing the pass at which he had arrived, was on the point of leaving Rome, and going into the territory of Genoa to an abbey belonging to the Bishop of Aleria, a creature of Giulio, and a great friend of his own, where he could complete his work, the place being conveniently situated with regard to Carrara, and one to which he could easily have the marbles brought by way of the sea. He also thought of going to Urbino, where he had formerly intended to live, as it was a quiet place, and one in which, for the sake of Giulio, he thought he would be welcomed: and for this purpose he had some months before sent one of his men to purchase a house and some land. However, fearing the greatness of the Pope, as he justly might, he did not go; and he hoped to satisfy His Holiness with good words.

LI. But the Pope, remaining firm in his purpose, came one day to seek Michelangelo in his own house,

accompanied by eight or ten Cardinals, and desired to see the cartoon made under the direction of Clemente for the wall of the Sistine Chapel, the statues which he had already made for the tomb, and every detail. Whereupon the most reverend Cardinal of Mantua, who was present, seeing the Moses, about which we have already written and will shortly write more fully, said: "This statue alone is sufficient to do honour to the tomb of Giulio." Pope Paolo, having seen everything, again broached the subject of his entering his service, many Cardinals being present, and among them the above-mentioned most reverend and illustrious Cardinal of Mantua: and finding that Michelangelo stood firm, "I will see to it," he said, "that the Duke of Urbino shall be contented with three statues from your hand, and that the other three that remain shall be given to others to make." He accordingly obtained the consent of the Duke's agents to the making of a new contract, confirmed by His Excellency the Duke, who was unwilling to displease the Pope in the matter. So Michelangelo, although he might have avoided paying for the three statues, being freed from obligation by virtue of the new contract, nevertheless resolved to supply the money himself; and he deposited for them and for the rest of the tomb one thousand five hundred and eighty ducats. So the agents of His Excellency had the other statues made: and thus was finished the tragedy of the tomb, and the tomb itself. It may now be seen in San Piero ad Vincula, not according to the first design with four sides sculptured, but with one side only, and that one of the smaller; and not detached, but set against a wall: the result of those hindrances which I have described above. And true it is that, thus patched up and altered, it is yet the noblest sepulchral monument which can be seen in Rome, or perhaps

elsewhere ; if not in other respects, at least on account of the three statues from the hand of the master which form part of it ; among which especially marvellous is the statue of Moses, leader and chief of the Hebrews, who is sitting with an air of thoughtfulness and wisdom, holding under his right arm the Tables of the Law, and with his left hand supporting his chin, like one weary and full of care : and between the fingers of his left hand are straying some of the long hairs of his beard, a thing very beautiful to see. The face is full of life and expression, and calculated to inspire love together with fear ; which perhaps he did in truth. As usual in representations of Moses, he has two horns on his head, placed a little way back from the forehead : he wears a robe, and has hose on his feet, his arms being bare, and the rest of the details according to the antique. A marvellous work, and full of art ; but most of all in this, that beneath the beautiful drapery with which he is covered his whole form appears, the garment allowing the beauty of the body to be seen : an effect, as one sees, invariably produced by Michelangelo in all his clothed figures, both in painting and in sculpture. The size of this statue is more than twice that of nature. On the right of it, in a niche, is another which represents Contemplative Life, a woman more than life-size, but of exquisite beauty, with one knee bent, not on the ground, but on a pedestal, with her face and both hands raised to heaven, and seeming to breathe love in every part of her figure. On the other side, that is, on the left of the Moses, is Active Life, with a mirror in her right hand, in which she is attentively regarding herself, to signify that our actions should be well considered, and with a garland of flowers in her left. And in this Michelangelo has followed Dante, whom he has always studied, and who in his

“Purgatorio” tells how he found the Countess Matilda, by whom he represents Active Life, in a field of flowers. The whole of the tomb is nothing if not beautiful, and especially the uniting of its parts together by means of the cornice, with which no fault can possibly be found.

LII. Now let this suffice in regard to this work, and I even doubt whether I have not written too much, and whether, instead of pleasing, I have not wearied the reader. Nevertheless it appeared to me necessary, in order to put an end to that injurious and false belief which had taken root in men’s minds, that Michelangelo had received sixteen thousand scudi, and that he would not do that which he was bound to do in return. Neither the one thing nor the other was true, for he did not receive from Giulio for the tomb more than a thousand ducats, which he spent all those months in getting marble from Carrara. And how could he afterwards have had money from him if he changed his mind, and would speak no more about the tomb? As for those sums which, after the death of Pope Giulio, he received from the two cardinals, who were executors of the will, he has warrants for them in his possession, drawn up by a notary, and sent him by Bernardo Bini, a Florentine citizen (who was trustee, and paid the money); and they amounted to about three thousand ducats. But in spite of all, there never was a man more eager for any work than was he for that, both because he knew how much reputation he would gain by it, and because of the memory he always cherished of the blessed soul of Pope Giulio, for the sake of whom he has always honoured and loved the house of Della Rovere, and especially the Dukes of Urbino, on whose behalf, as has been

said above, he took upon him to resist two pontiffs, who wished him to abandon the work: and this it is which grieves Michelangelo, that instead of winning gratitude thereby, he has incurred hatred, and gained disrepute.

LIII. But to return to Pope Paolo: after the last agreement made between His Excellency the Duke and Michelangelo, the Pope, having taken him into his service, desired him to put into execution that which he had already begun in the time of Clemente, and directed him to paint the end wall of the Sistine Chapel, which he had already rough cast and enclosed with scaffolding from the floor to the roof. And in this work, since it was the original conception of Pope Clemente, and had been begun in his time, he did not place the arms of Paolo, although the Pope had requested him to do so. Pope Paolo cherished such love and reverence for Michelangelo, that, although he desired this, yet he would not cross him in the matter.

In this work Michelangelo achieved all that can be done by the art of painting in the representation of the human body, not omitting any attitude or movement. The composition of the subject is ingenious and well thought out; but it would be a long, and perhaps unnecessary task, to describe it, so many and such various representations of it having been engraved and distributed everywhere. Nevertheless, for the sake of anyone who may not have seen the original, or into whose hands the engraving may not have come, I will briefly say, that the fresco being divided into the following parts, right, left, upper, lower, and central, in the central space near to the earth, are the seven angels described by Saint John in the Apocalypse, who with trumpets at their mouths summon the dead to judgment from the four quarters of the world: with

whom are two others, holding an open book, in which every one, reading and recognising his past life, may be able as it were to judge himself. At the sound of these trumpets the tombs on earth open, and the human race comes forth, in varied and marvellous attitudes: while of some the bones only have come together, according to the prophecy of Ezekiel; others are half-clothed in flesh, others entirely: one is naked, another covered with those garments or sheets, in which he had been carried to his grave, and of these he is seeking to divest himself. Among them there are some who do not seem to be entirely awake, and looking up to heaven stand as though in doubt whether the Divine Justice is calling them. Here it is beautiful to see some with fatigue and effort struggling forth from the earth, some with arms outspread, about to take flight to heaven, and some already mounting upward; ascending some higher, some less high, with various gestures and attitudes. Above the angels of the trumpets is the Son of God in majesty, with His arm and mighty right hand upraised, as though in anger cursing the wicked, and driving them from His presence into eternal fire; and with His left hand extended towards the right side, gently gathering together the good. And carrying out His divine sentence, angels are seen between heaven and earth; on the right hand hastening to the aid of the elect, whose flight is hindered by malignant spirits, and on the left thrusting back to earth such of the reprobate as had already in their boldness begun to rise: and these, moreover, are drawn down again by malignant spirits, the proud by their hair, and so on, each sinner by that part in which he had sinned. And below the reprobate is seen Charon with his boat, such as

Dante describes him in his “*Inferno*” in the marsh of Acheron, and he raises his oar to strike any soul that shows reluctance: and when they reach the shore, all the souls are seen vying with each other in their haste to quit the boat, spurred by the Divine Justice: so that fear, as the poet says, turns to desire. Then having received their sentence from Minos, they are drawn by malignant spirits into the infernal abyss, where attitudes of violent emotion and despair, such as are suited to the place, are marvellously depicted. In the centre around the Son of God in the clouds of heaven, a circle and crown is formed by the blessed who have already risen: but apart and next to her Son, His Mother, somewhat timorous in appearance, and as though not well assured concerning the wrath and the hidden counsel of God, draws as far as she can beneath the protection of her Son. After her the Baptist, and the twelve Apostles, and many saints of God, each one showing to the awful judge the thing by means of which he was deprived of life, confessing His name: Sant Andrea, the cross; San Bartolommeo, his skin; San Lorenzo, the gridiron; San Bastiano, the arrows; San Biagio, the iron combs; Santa Caterina, the wheel; and so on, so that we are able to recognise each of them. Above these on the right and left, on the upper part of the wall, are seen groups of little angels, in lovely and exquisite attitudes, showing in heaven the cross of the Son of God, the sponge, the crown of thorns, the nails, and the column on which He was scourged, in order to reproach the wicked with the benefits of God, which they have not acknowledged, nor been anywise grateful for, and to comfort and reassure the good. There are endless details, which I pass over in silence. Suffice it, that besides the divine composition of the

subject, one sees there represented whatever nature can do with the human body.

LIV. Finally, Pope Paolo, having built a chapel on the same storey as the Sistine Chapel above mentioned, wished to adorn it with memorials of Michelangelo: and directed him to paint two large pictures on the side walls: in one of which is represented the crucifixion of Saint Peter, and in the other the story of Saint Paul, when he was converted by the apparition of Jesus Christ: each of these is astonishing, both in the general representation of the subject, and in the details of each figure. And this is the last painting which, up to the present day, he has produced: and he finished it when he was seventy-five years of age. He has now in his hands a work in marble, which he is doing for his own pleasure, for, being full of ideas, he is obliged every day to bring forth some one of them. This is a group of four figures of more than life-size, namely, a Christ taken down from the cross, supported in death by his Mother, whose arms, breast, and knee appear to glide beneath his body in a wonderfully beautiful attitude: and for this purpose she is aided from above by Nicodemus, who, standing firm on his feet, sustains the body under the arms, showing great vigour and strength: and on the left side by one of the Maries, who, although filled with grief, nevertheless does not fail in giving that aid which the Mother, through her extreme sorrow, is unable to render. Christ falls lifeless with all his limbs relaxed, but in an attitude very different from that which Michelangelo designed for the Marchioness of Pescara, and from that of the Madonna della Febbre. It would be impossible to describe the beautiful expression of love that is seen in the grieved and mournful countenances of all, but especially of the sorrowing Mother: there-

fore let this suffice. It is without doubt a masterpiece, and one of the most difficult works which, up to the present, he has accomplished: chiefly because all the figures are seen distinctly, nor are the garments of one blended with the garments of another.

L V. Michelangelo has made numberless other things, which I have not mentioned: as the Christ which is in the Minerva; a Saint Matthew in Florence, which he began with the intention of making twelve Apostles to be placed in front of twelve pilasters in the cathedral; cartoons for various paintings; designs for public and private buildings, endless in number: and finally, the design of a bridge for the Grand Canal at Venice, of a new form and style and such as is not elsewhere seen: and many other things which have not seen the light, and which it would be long to describe: therefore here I make an end. His intention is to give this Pietà to some church, and to be buried at the foot of the altar over which it will be placed. May the Lord God of his goodness long preserve him to us, since I doubt not but that the same day will end his life and his labours, as it is written of Socrates. Good hope I have that he may yet live many years, both because of his own active and robust old age, and because of the long life of his father; who, without knowing what illness was, reached his ninety-second year, and died at last rather from failure of will than from disease: insomuch that, when he was dead, as Michelangelo relates, he retained the same colour in his face which he had when living, and appeared rather to be asleep than dead.

L VI. Michelangelo has been, from his boyhood, a very hard worker, and to the gift of nature he has added knowledge, which he has not been content to acquire by means of the labours and industry of others: but he has learnt from nature herself, putting her always

before him as the true model. For there is not an animal whose anatomy he has not studied, and so much has he studied that of man, that those who have spent their whole life in this pursuit, and make it their profession, hardly know as much of it as he does: I am speaking of the knowledge which is necessary for the arts of painting and sculpture, and not of all the details which anatomists investigate. And that this is so is shown by his figures, in which so much art and knowledge is found that they are almost inimitable by any painter whatever. I have always had the opinion that the endeavours and efforts of Nature have a prescribed limit, fixed and ordained by God, which by ordinary power cannot be passed: and that this is true, not only in painting and sculpture, but universally in all the arts and sciences: and that Nature makes a special effort in one man, that she may have him for an example and rule in that faculty, giving him the first place; insomuch that, if any one afterwards wishes to produce something in the same art worthy of being read or seen, it must either be the same that has already been produced by that first man, or at least similar to it, and proceeding in the same way; or, if not, it will be inferior to it, in proportion as it deviates from the right path. After Plato and Aristotle, how many philosophers have we seen, who, not being followers of them, were of any value? How many orators after Demosthenes and Cicero? How many mathematicians after Euclid and Archimedes? How many physicians after Hippocrates and Galenus? Or poets after Homer and Virgil? And if there should have been any one who has laboured in one of these sciences, and has been in every way capable of reaching by himself the first place, nevertheless, having found it already occupied, and perfection being no other than what those

first men have already produced, he has either given up the attempt, or if he were wise, has devoted himself to imitating their work, as being ideal perfection. This is seen at the present time in Bembo, in Sanazzaro, in Caro, in Guidicicci, in the Marchesana di Pescara, and in other writers and lovers of Tuscan poetry: who, although they are possessed of great and remarkable talent, nevertheless, not being able of themselves to produce anything better than what nature has achieved in Petrarch, have devoted themselves to imitating him, but with such felicity, that they are judged worthy of being read, and are reckoned among good writers.

LVII. Now to conclude this my discourse: I say that it seems to me that in painting and sculpture nature has liberally and bountifully bestowed upon Michelangelo all her wealth: so that I am not to be rebuked if I have said that his figures are almost inimitable. Nor does it appear to me that in this I have allowed myself to be too much carried away: for allowing that he is the only man who, up to the present time, has set his hand worthily to both chisel and brush, and that no memorials of the ancients in painting now remain: in statuary (of which much has come down to us) to whom does he give place? In the opinion of artists certainly to no one; and of what value is the verdict of the crowd, who, without independent judgment, admire antiquity, and are jealous of the talent and industry of their own time? Although I do not now know any one who maintains the contrary, so far has Michelangelo risen above envy. Raffaello da Urbino, how much soever he may have entered into rivalry with Michelangelo, has many times admitted that he thanked God that he was born in his time: having gained from him a manner different from that which he had learnt from his father, who was a painter, and from Perugino, his

master. But what could be a greater or clearer proof of this man's excellence than the way in which the princes of the world contended for the possession of him? For besides the four pontiffs, Giulio, Leone, Clemente, and Paolo, even the Grand Turk, the father of him who rules the empire at the present time, as I said before, sent certain monks of the order of San Francesco to him, with letters entreating that he would come and take up his abode with him: not only giving him orders on the bank of the Gondi at Florence for as much money as he desired for his journey, but also directing that when he reached Cossa, a town near to Ragusa, he should thence be accompanied as far as Constantinople in the most honourable way by one of his own grandees. Francis of Valois, King of France, sought by many means to persuade him to enter his service, directing that three thousand scudi for the expenses of his journey should be paid to him in Rome, whenever he would come. The Signoria of Venice, sent Bruciolo to Rome, to invite him to reside in their city, and to offer him a pension of six hundred scudi a year: not binding him to anything, but only in order that he might honour the Republic with his personal presence: it being agreed that, if he should produce any work in their service, he should be paid for everything, just as if he had no pension from them. These are no ordinary incidents, nor such as take place every day, but are new and contrary to general custom; nor are they wont to occur, except in the case of remarkable and excellent talent, as was that of Homer, about whom many cities contended, each one of them claiming him and making him its own.

LVIII. Nor is the esteem in which he has been held by those already mentioned greater than that with which the pontiff Giulio III. regards and has always

regarded him : a prince of the highest understanding, and a lover and patron universally of every excellence, but especially devoted to painting, sculpture, and architecture. This indeed may clearly be seen in the works which His Holiness has had executed in the palace and in Belvedere, and which are now being carried out in his Villa Giulia (a memorial and a conception worthy of a lofty and generous mind such as his); which is filled with statues, ancient and modern, and with a great variety of most beautiful stones, and of valuable marble columns, with stucco, with pictures, and with every other sort of ornament; but of this I will write another time, as it requires a work to itself, and as it has not yet reached its perfection. He has not employed Michelangelo in the work, having regard to his age. He knows well and appreciates his greatness, but refrains from burdening him more than he himself desires: and this consideration, in my opinion, does more honour to Michelangelo than any commission with which he has been charged by the other pontiffs. It is true that in the works of painting and sculpture, which His Holiness is continually having executed, he almost always seeks his opinion and advice, often actually sending the workmen to his house to find him. It grieves me, and it also grieves His Holiness, that through a certain timidity which is natural to him, or we may say, through a feeling of respect or reverence, which some call pride, he does not avail himself of the benevolence, goodness, and liberality of so great a pontiff, and one who is so much his friend: who, indeed, as I formerly heard from the most reverend Monsignor di Forlì, his chamberlain, has many times said that he would willingly, if it were possible, give up some of the years of his own life, and of the blood from his own veins, to add them to the life of Michelangelo, in order that the

world should not be so soon deprived of such a man. And this I, who have also had access to His Holiness, have with my own ears heard from his mouth ; and more, that if he survives him, as is to be expected in the natural course of life, he intends to have him embalmed, and to keep him near him, in order that his corpse may last for ever, like his works : and he said this, quite in the beginning of his pontificate, to Michelangelo himself, in the presence of many others : nor do I know what could be more honourable to Michelangelo than these words, or a greater sign of the esteem with which His Holiness regards him.

LIX. And this esteem he again clearly showed when, Pope Paolo being dead and he himself being elected pontiff, in the consistory, in the presence of all the cardinals who were then in Rome, he defended Michelangelo and took his part against the overseers of the building of San Pietro : who, not for any fault of his, as they said, but for that of his agents, wished to take away from him, or at least to curtail, that authority, which Pope Paolo, by a brief, of which I will shortly speak, had conferred upon him : and he defended him insomuch that he not only confirmed the brief, but spoke of him with many honourable words, nor did he ever again lend an ear to the complaints of the overseers, or of anyone else. Michelangelo knows (as he has many times said to me) the love and goodwill of the Pope towards him, and likewise the consideration in which he holds him : and because he cannot devote himself to his service in return, and show his thankfulness, he has but little pleasure in the rest of his life, since it seems to be ungrateful and profitless to His Holiness. One thing (as he is wont to say) somewhat comforts him, namely, that knowing the wisdom of His Holiness,

he hopes that thereby excuse may be made for him, and that his good will may be accepted, since he can make no other gift. Nor would he indeed refuse, as much as his strength permits, and according to his ability, at least to devote his life to His Holiness: and this I have heard from his own mouth. Michelangelo, however, prepared at the request of the Pope, a design for the façade of a palace, which he was intending to build in Rome: and this, by every one who sees it, is thought to be a new and original thing, not bound by the laws of any style, ancient or modern. This may be said also of much of his other work in Florence and in Rome, in which he shows that architecture has not been so exhaustively treated by his predecessors that there is no room for new invention, as graceful and beautiful as theirs.

LX. Now to return to the subject of anatomy: he gave up dissecting corpses, because much handling of them had so disordered his stomach, that he could neither eat nor drink so as to do himself any good. It is indeed true that he became so well-informed and learned in the science, that he has often had it in his mind to write a book, for the use of those who wish to pursue the arts of painting and sculpture, which should treat of the different kinds of movements and aspects of the human body, and of the bones, setting forth an ingenious theory, which in the course of his long experience he has evolved; and he would have done so, had he not doubted his own power, and whether he were competent to handle such a subject with the dignity and style which one practised in the science of composition would have done. I know well that when he reads Alberto Duro, it seems to him a very feeble work, and he sees in his own mind how much more beautiful is his own theory, as well

as more useful in the study of anatomy. And to say the truth, Alberto only treats of the different sorts of bodies and their measurements, about which no certain rule can be given, making his figures as straight as sticks ; and of that which is more important, namely human attitudes and gestures, he says not a word. And because Michelangelo is now old and heavy with years, and thinks that he will not be able to put his idea before the world in writing, he has with great zeal explained the whole matter most minutely to me : and he also began to discuss it with Messer Realdo Colombo, a most excellent anatomist and surgeon, and a great friend to Michelangelo and to me : who sent him for the purpose the dead body of a Moor, a most beautiful young man, and perfectly well developed : and it was placed in Santa Agata, where I was dwelling and still dwell, as being an out of the way part : and demonstrating with this body Michelangelo showed me many rare and hidden things, perhaps never before clearly understood ; all of which I noted down, and hope one day, with the aid of some learned man, to give to the world, for the benefit and advantage of all those who wish to pursue the arts of painting and sculpture : but enough of this matter.

LXI. He devoted himself to perspective and architecture, in which subjects his works show the proficiency to which he attained. Nor was Michelangelo content with a knowledge of the principal parts of architecture, but resolved to learn all that would in any way be serviceable to the art ; as, for instance, to make traps, scaffoldings, floors, and so on : in all which things he was the equal of those who have no other profession, and this was shown in the time of Giulio II. in the following way. Michelangelo being about to paint the roof of the Sistine Chapel, the Pope

ordered Bramante to make the scaffolding. He, although he was so great an architect, not knowing how to make it, pierced the roof in several places, bringing down from these holes certain ropes, which were to support the scaffolding. Michelangelo, seeing this, laughed, and asked Bramante what he was to do when he came to the holes. Bramante, who had no defence to make, only replied that he could do no otherwise. The matter was brought before the Pope, and Bramante making the same reply, the Pope turned to Michelangelo and said : " Since this will not do, go and make it for yourself." Michelangelo took down the scaffolding, and so many were the ropes that had been used in it, that a poor workman of his, to whom he gave them, was thereby enabled to marry two of his daughters. And he made his own without cords, so well woven and fitted together, that the heavier the weight placed on it, the firmer it became. By this means Bramante's eyes were opened, and he learnt the way in which a scaffolding should be made : which was afterwards of much assistance to him in the building of San Pietro. And although Michelangelo had no equal in all these matters, none the less he would never profess himself an architect ; nay rather, when at length Antonio da San Gallo, the architect of the Church of San Pietro, died, and Pope Paolo wished to appoint him in his place, he absolutely refused the office, alleging that it was not his art : and he so persisted in his refusal, that the Pope was obliged to command him to accept it, conferring the fullest powers upon him by a brief, which was afterwards confirmed by Pope Giulio III., who, as I have said, is at the present time our pontiff by the Grace of God. In return for this service Michelangelo would accept no reward, and wished this to be made

clear in the brief. So that Pope Paolo sending him one day a hundred golden scudi by Messer Pier Giovanni, who was then Master of the Wardrobe to His Holiness, and is now Bishop of Forlì, as the amount of his salary for a month on account of the building, he refused to take it, saying that this was not according to the compact existing between them, and sent him back again: at which Pope Paolo was very angry, as I have also been told by Messer Alessandro Ruffini, a Roman gentleman, at that time Groom-in-Waiting and Carver to His Holiness: but not for this was Michelangelo moved from his resolve. As he had undertaken this work, he made a new model, both because certain parts of the old one did not in many respects please him, and because the design was such that one might sooner hope to see the last day of the world than San Pietro finished: which model, praised and approved by the pontiff, is at present followed, to the great satisfaction of those persons who have judgment, although there are some who do not like it.

LXII. Michelangelo then devoted himself, when he was young, not only to sculpture and painting, but also to all those arts which belong to, or are connected with, these: and this he did with such diligence, that for a time he withdrew almost entirely from the company of men, consorting with but very few; whence he was taken to be proud, eccentric, and humoursome, though he had none of these faults; but (as it has happened to many notable men) the love of art, and the continual pursuit thereof, made him solitary, and he found in it his delight and pleasure, insomuch that intercourse with others gave him no satisfaction, but was vexatious to him, since it diverted him from his studies: for he (as the great Scipio was

wont to say of himself) was never less alone than when he was alone.

LXIII. He, however, willingly cultivated the friendship of those from whose cultured and learned discourse he might be able to derive some profit, and in whom shone some ray of excellence: as, for instance, the most reverend and illustrious Monsignor Polo, for the sake of his rare talents and singular goodness; and also my most reverend Patron, Cardinal Crispo, since he found in him, besides his many good qualities, a rare and excellent judgment. He had also a sincere affection for the most reverend Cardinal Santa Croce, a man of great weight and prudence, of whom I have often heard him speak in the most honourable terms: and also for the most reverend Maffei, whose goodness and learning he has always extolled; and, without exception, he loves and honours all the members of the Farnese family, for the lively memory which he cherishes of Pope Paolo, whom he always mentions with the greatest reverence, continually speaking of him as a good and holy man. Thus, also, he has a great regard for the most reverend Patriarch of Jerusalem, formerly Bishop of Cesena, with whom for a long time he has held the most familiar intercourse, taking great pleasure in a nature so candid and liberal. He was also on terms of intimate friendship with my most reverend patron Cardinal Ridolfi, of blessed memory, who was like a harbour of refuge to all artists. There are also others, whom I pass over that I may not be tedious; as Monsignor Claudio Tolomei, Messer Lorenzo Ridolfi, Messer Donato Giannotti, Messer Lionardo Malespini, Lottino, Messer Tommaso del Cavaliere, and other honourable gentlemen, of whom I will not speak at greater length. Latterly he has become much attached to Annabal Caro, whom he has

told me that he regrets not having known before, as he has found him very congenial. In especial, he greatly loved the Marchioness of Pescara, being enamoured of her divine spirit, and was in return passionately beloved by her: and he still has in his possession many of her letters, full of a most sweet and honourable love; letters such as might be expected from one with a heart like hers; and he has himself likewise written to her very many sonnets, full of genius and of sweet desire. She many times left Viterbo and other places, whither she had gone for recreation and to pass the summer, and came to Rome, with no other purpose than to see Michelangelo; and he, in return, bore her so great love, that I remember hearing him say that he had no other grief, except that, when he went to see her as she was passing from this life, he did not kiss her forehead or her face, as he kissed her hand. And her death so affected him, that he would often remain dazed, and as one that had lost his senses. At the request of this lady he made an undraped Christ taken down from the cross: whose body, relaxed in death, is like to fall at the feet of His most holy Mother, were it not that two little angels support Him in their arms. And she, sitting under the cross, with a sad and tearful countenance, raises both her outstretched arms to heaven, and seems to be uttering words such as those written on the cross, "Men think not how much blood it costs." The cross is similar to that which at the time of the plague, in the year 1348, was carried in procession by the Bianchi, and was afterwards placed in the church of Santa Croce at Florence. He also made for love of her a design for a Jesus Christ on the cross, not with the appearance of death, as he is usually represented, but raising his face to the Father with a divine gesture, as though he were saying, "Eli, Eli:" and the

body is not relaxed in death, but like one in life, sensitive and writhing with the bitter pain.

LXIV. And as he always delights in the discourse of learned men, so he takes pleasure in the works of writers, both in prose and verse, among whom he specially admires Dante, being delighted by his admirable genius, and he has his writings almost all by heart: although, perhaps, he holds no less by Petrarch. And not only does he take pleasure in reading these authors, but also sometimes composes verses himself, as may be seen by some sonnets he has written, which afford the greatest proof of his literary skill and insight: and there are published certain discourses and comments by Varchi on some of these. But he applies himself to this for his own pleasure, and makes no profession of writing, always depreciating himself, and declaring his own ignorance of such matters.

LXV. He also reads with great diligence and attention the sacred Scriptures, both the Old Testament and the New, and works compiled thereon; as for instance the writings of Savonarola, for whom he has always cherished the greatest affection, the memory of his thrilling voice still remaining in his mind. He also loves the beauty of the body, since indeed he best understands it: and he so loves it, that certain carnally minded men, who cannot understand the love of beauty, except it be lascivious and dishonourable, have for this cause thought and spoken evil of him: as though Alcibiades, a most beautiful young man, was not most honourably loved by Socrates. I have often heard Michelangelo reason and discourse of love: and have afterwards heard from those who were present, that what he said of love was exactly the same as may be read in the writings of Plato. I for my part do not know what Plato says about

this matter: but I know well that, though I have held such long and intimate intercourse with Michelangelo, I have never heard from his mouth a word that was not most honourable, and of a kind to restrain any lawless and unbridled desire that might awake in the minds of the young. And that in him are no base thoughts, may also be known from the fact that he loves not only human beauty, but universally every beautiful thing; a beautiful horse, a beautiful dog, a beautiful landscape, a beautiful plant, a beautiful mountain, a beautiful forest, and every place and thing that is beautiful and exquisite in its own kind, marvelling at it with wonderful love: and gathering beauty from nature, as the bees gather honey from the flowers, to make use of it afterwards in his works: which indeed has always been done by those who have had any renown in painting. The sculptor of antiquity, in order to make a Venus, did not content himself with seeing one maiden only, but was fain to study the figures of many: and taking the most beautiful and the most perfect part of each, made use of it for his Venus. And if anyone thinks that without employing this method (by means of which the true theory of which I was speaking, is evolved), he can attain to excellence in this art, he is very greatly deceived.

LXVI. In his diet Michelangelo has always been very sparing, eating rather for necessity than for pleasure, and generally while at work; when he was for the most part contented with a piece of bread, which he ate without leaving off his work. Of late, however, his habits have been more regular, which indeed is required by his age, which is now past maturity. I have often heard him say: "Ascanio, rich as I have been, I have lived like a poor man."

And as he has been contented with little food, so also has he taken but little sleep, which, according to what he says, seldom does him any good, since when sleeping he almost always suffers from pains in the head: also too much sleep gives him indigestion. When he was stronger, he often slept in his clothes and with his boots on his feet, which he always wore, both on account of the cramp, from which he continually suffered, and for other reasons: and it has sometimes been so difficult to draw them off, that the skin has come away with the boots, like the slough of a serpent. He was never miserly, nor cared to hoard up money, being content with as much as enabled him to live moderately: so that though very many gentlemen and rich persons have asked for some work from his hand, promising large sums in return, he has seldom acceded to the request; and when he has done so, it has been more from friendship and kindness than through hope of reward.

LXVII. He has given away many of the things he has made, though if he had chosen to sell them, they would have brought him an enormous sum of money; as, for instance, to speak of one case only, the two statues which he gave to his great friend, Messer Roberto Strozzi. And not only has he been liberal with his works, but with his purse also has often helped at need some poor and worthy student of letters or of painting, of which I can bear witness, having myself experienced his charity. Moreover, he was never envious of the works of others in his own art, and this was more due to the goodness of his nature, than to any opinion which he had of himself. So he has always praised everyone, even Raffaello da Urbino, between whom and himself there was at one time some rivalry in painting,

as I have said. I have only heard him say that Raffaello was not an artist by nature, but by long study. Nor is that true which many lay to his charge, that he refused to teach his art to others. On the contrary, he taught willingly, and this I have known in my own case, to whom he has shown every secret that appertains to his art: but misfortune would have it, that he has met with persons either of little aptitude, or if they had aptitude, they were not persevering; but after they had been under his instruction a few months, they considered themselves masters. And though he has done this willingly, yet he has never wished it to be known, desiring rather to do than to appear to do good. It should also be said that he always sought to instruct noble persons in this art, as the ancients were accustomed to do, and not common people.

LXVIII. He has the most tenacious memory, insomuch that, though he has painted so many thousands of figures, he has never produced one that resembled, or that had the same attitude as another: and I have heard him say that he never draws a line without considering whether he has drawn it before: and in case he has done so, he erases it, if it is to be seen in public. He has also the most powerful imagination, the result of which is, in the first place, that he is little contented with his own work, and always depreciates it: for it seems to him that his hand does not realise that idea, which he forms within his mind. From the same cause it also results (as is the case with the greater number of those who give themselves up to a life of leisure and contemplation) that he is timid, except when roused to just anger by injury or wrong committed against himself or others: in which case he shows more spirit than those who

are considered courageous ; but in other things he is most patient. Of his modesty it is impossible to say as much as it deserves, nor of many other habits and customs of his, seasoned as they also are with good humour and shrewdness, like the reply which he made to a gentleman in Bologna, who, seeing the height and size of that bronze statue which Michelangelo had made, wondered, and said : “Which do you think is greater ; that statue, or a pair of asses ?” To which Michelangelo replied ; “It depends on what asses you mean ; if these of Bologna, doubtless they are bigger ; but if ours of Florence, they are much smaller.”¹ Thus too, Francia, who at that time was considered an Apelles in Bologna, seeing the same statue, and saying, “That is a beautiful bronze,” Michelangelo, thinking that he was praising the metal, not the figure, laughed and replied, “If that is a beautiful bronze, I am indebted for it to Pope Giulio, who gave it to me, as you are to the chymists, who give you your colours.” And another time, seeing a son of the same Francia, who was very beautiful : “My boy,” he said, “your father makes his living figures more beautiful than his painted ones.”

LXIX. Michelangelo is of a good constitution : his body rather sinewy and large-boned, than fat or fleshy ; above all, healthy, both by nature, and as a consequence of the physical exercise he has taken, and his moderate and frugal habits ; although as a boy he was sickly and ailing, and has had two illnesses in later life. He has, indeed, suffered a good deal the last few years from dysuria, which would have developed into gravel, if he had not been cured by the skill and care of Messer

¹ N.B.—The word in the original is *buoi, oxen*, which was used in the sense of boobies.

Realdo, whom I mentioned before. He has always had a good colour in his face; and as regards his stature, he is of medium height, broad in the shoulders, and the rest of the body in proportion, though rather slender than otherwise. The shape of the head in front is round, so that above the ears it makes one-sixth more than half a circle. Thus the temples project somewhat beyond the ears, the ears beyond the cheeks, and they beyond the rest: insomuch that the head, in proportion to the face, cannot but be called large. The forehead from this point of view is square: the nose somewhat flattened, not by nature, but because, when he was a boy, one named Torrigiano de' Torrigiani, a brutal and arrogant man, with a blow of his fist, crushed the cartilage of the nose, so that he was brought home like one dead: and Torrigiano, in consequence of this deed, was banished from Florence and came to a bad end: the nose, however, flattened as it is, is in proportion to the forehead and the rest of the face. The lips are thin, but the lower one is somewhat thicker than the other, so that, when seen in profile, it slightly projects; the chin is in keeping with the rest of the face. The forehead in profile almost overhangs the nose, which would have the appearance of being broken, but that it has a little hunch in the middle. The eye-brows are scanty: the eyes may be called rather small than otherwise, and are the colour of horn, but changing, and scintillating with flashes of yellow and blue: the ears are well-proportioned, the hair and beard black, except that at his present age of seventy-nine, they are both plentifully sprinkled with grey: and the beard is four or five inches long, divided, and not very thick, as indeed is partly perceptible in his portrait. Many other things I had to say, which, being in haste to publish this that is written, I have omitted; knowing

that certain others wish to gain the credit of my work, which I had committed to their charge; so if it shall ever happen that another desires to put his hand to the task, and to write the life of Michelangelo, I will with the greatest pleasure communicate everything to him, or put it in writing. I hope in a short time to publish certain sonnets and madrigals of his, which I have long been collecting both from himself and from others: for I wish to prove to the world how great was the power of his imagination, and how many beautiful thoughts arose in his divine mind. And thus I make an end.

IN the following translation of the sonnets of Michelangelo the autograph edition of Signor Cesare Guasti has been followed: except that the last nine, which are among those left unfinished by Michelangelo, have been translated from the version published by his great-nephew in 1623.

S. E. H.

SONNETS OF
MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

I.

THE nether worlds of justice and of ruth
He, heaven-descended, as a mortal trod,
Then living rose again to worship God,
And show to men the perfect light of truth.
Bright star, whose heavenly radiance vainly shone
Upon that unjust land which gave me birth,
To thee this whole world's wealth is little worth.
Who made thee is thy recompense alone.
For Dante's work his race, that knew him not,
Reward of base ingratitude did give,
Who favour to the just alone deny.
Would I were he, and born with equal lot !
To share his worth, and in sad exile live,
I would resign earth's chief felicity.

II.

So brightly burns his splendour in our eyes,
All that we would, of him we cannot say :
Denounce the crowd that injured him we may,
But not our greatest to his worth may rise.
For us enduring to behold the dire
Effects of sin below, to God he rose ;
And gates which Heaven to Dante would not close,
His country closed against his just desire.
Ungrateful land, that her own fate hath nursed
To self-destruction ! Lo ! the sign is clear :—
That she her best doth with most woes confound.
Among a thousand causes this the first :
If none in wrongful exile is his peer,
No greater man, nay, nor so great, is found.

III.

To POPE JULIUS II.

If truth in any ancient saw there be,
'Tis here, "Who can, he never hath the will :"
To tales and foolish talk thou listenest still,
Rewarding him who is truth's enemy.
I am of old thy faithful servitor,
To thee belong as to the sun its rays :
But thou, unrecking of my wasted days,
Art more displeasèd, as I toil the more.
I trusted by thy greatness to ascend :
Need is of sword and scales to shield the weak,
Not empty words by Echo utterèd.
In scorn it is that heaven doth virtue send
To dwell on earth, who mocking bids it seek
Fruit of its labour from a tree that's dead.

IV

Here swords are wrought from cups of sacrament,
The holy blood of Christ is given for gold,
For lance and buckler, cross and thorns are sold :
The patience of the very Christ is spent !
Let Him within our borders come no more,
Since Rome, who in her Saviour's blood doth trade,
Will sell His flesh for any price that's paid :
And hath to every virtue closed the door.
If by my work, the offspring of my mind,
I too with treasure would my coffers fill,
I see in Peter's chair Medusa throned.
Though poverty in Heaven do favour find,
What recompense shall be of earthly ill,
If earth's defeat undo the life beyond ?

V.

TO GIOVANNI DA PISTOIA.

In this hard toil I such a crop have grown,
Like cats that water drink in Lombardy,
(Or wheresoever else the place may be)
That chin and belly meet perforce in one.
My beard doth point to heaven, my scalp its place
Upon my shoulder finds ; my chest, you'll say,
A harpy's is, my paint-brush all the day
Doth drop a rich mosaic on my face.
My loins have enterèd my paunch within,
My nether end my balance doth supply,
My feet unseen move to and fro in vain.
In front to utmost length is stretched my skin
And wrinkled up in folds behind, while I
Am bent as bowmen bend a bow in Spain.
No longer true or sane,
The judgment now doth from the mind proceed,
For 'tis ill shooting through a twisted reed.
Then thou, my picture dead,
Defend it, Giovan, and my honour—why ?
The place is evil, and no painter I.

VI.

To GIOVANNI DA PISTOIA AND THE PISTOIANS.

My thanks for your most courteous compliment !
Your missive I full twenty times have read :
As is a feast to one already fed,
So hate is to your native temperament.
Since parting from you, I have learnt, 'tis true,
That Cain hath in your pedigree a place,
Nor do you your great ancestor disgrace.
Your neighbour gaineth ought ? 'tis loss to you.
The foes of heaven, with hatred filled and scorn,
Mercy's sweet face is loathsome in your sight,
Who to your hurt alone have fealty sworn.
Enough if that which Dante once did write
Of thy Pistoia in thy mind be borne—
And thou wouldst flatter Florence ! Hypocrite !
A jewel of delight
She is ; but not to thee her worth she shows,
He knows her not, who little virtue knows.

VII.

To LUIGI DEL RICCIO.

Oft in the bosom of sweet courtesy
There lurks a sword, that striketh unawares
Honour and life : beside such hurt appears
Less dear the gift of health thou gavest me.
Who maketh swift the feet, and then doth spread,
Straight in the path, a net concealed from sight,
He quenches, when it fain would burn most bright,
The flame of gratitude by love that's fed.
Then, my Luigi, free from all alloy
Keep thou that love to which my life I owe,
That so the winds of wrath disturb it not,
For wrath fair kindness' image doth destroy.
If ought I know of friendship, this I know :
A thousand joys are in one grief forgot,

VIII.

To LUIGI DEL RICCIO.

On the Death of Cecchino Bracci.

Hardly had I beheld those beauteous eyes,
Which, living, were of thine the life and light,
When, closed to earth the day his soul took flight,
He opened them on God in Paradise.
I weep the error, though not mine it be,
Whereby my heart their beauty loved too late,
But Death's, who snatched, with haste intemperate,
Him from my sight, he may not take from thee.
Then if, Luigi, we the form would make
Of peerless Cecchin live for aye in stone,
(Since now, a little dust, he lieth here)
If lover may the loved one's semblance take,
And, vision wanting, art is nought alone,
Thy portrait made will give his image clear.

IX.

Sugar thou givest, lamps, a mule to ride,
And add'st thereto a flask of ruddy wine ;
Gifts which do so outrun all needs of mine,
That with St. Michael I the wealth divide.
Lapped in a calm too deep, my little boat,
With idle sails, upon a windless sea,
Is like to lose its way, and seems to be
A straw upon the rolling waves afloat.
With kindness such as thine, and bounty rare,
The food, the drink, the riding to and fro,
The thought wherewith my every want is met :
Dear friend, the present would as nought compare,
Could I myself and all I have bestow :
No gift he gives, who only pays a debt.

X.

To GANDOLFO PORRINO.

Reply to a request for a portrait of Faustina Mancina.

Beauty undreamed, that hath no peer in heaven,
Nor equal in this evil world below,
(The crowd, who blindly unadoring go,
As the left arm ¹ is named, its name have given)
This only thou dost love ; nor have I skill,
With painter's pencil, or in chiselled stone,
To give it form ; her beauteous face alone,
Restored to life, could thy desire fulfil.
And if, as each bright star at dawn doth fade,
So, at the vision, thought doth faint and die,
Its priceless virtue thus is proved to thee.
Therefore hath God himself her beauty made
New in the heavens, thy wish to satisfy ;
His only, and not mine, the task must be.

¹ Mancina.

XI.

To GIORGIO VASARI

If thou with pencil and with brush hast shown
How art, an equal, may with nature strive,
So her thou dost in part of worth deprive,
Making a beauty greater than her own.
Since now a nobler task thou dost essay,
With pen and ink to learned labour set,
Her crowning grace, from thee withholden yet,
Of giving others life, thou tak'st away.
For if with nature through the ages she
Contend in beauteous works, art giveth way,
Who may not her allotted term survive.
But since thou hast re-lit the memory
Of lives now past and gone, both thou and they,
In spite of nature, shall for ever live.

XII.

Blest spirit who, with fervour of love's own,
My heart, to death grown old, maks't live again,
And dost salute, amidst thy goodly train
Of thousand friends more noble, me alone ;
As then thou didst before my vision move,
So now, in hours that I with others use,
Thou visitest my mind, till hope subdues
The grief my soul doth feel no less than love.
Then finding in thee grace which speaks for me,
Grace speaking for me, that with sorrow live,
My pen such grace with gratitude would pay.
What great, unscrupled baseness would it be,
If I to thee should vilest pictures give,
And think against the gift of life to weigh.

XIII.

That I might, lady, less unworthy be
Of thine unmeasured kindness, my poor mind,
Seeking with all its powers, a way would find
To meet thine own with kindred courtesy.
But since the path, which that high goal doth reach,
Merit of mine availeth not to tread,
For pardon doth my guilty boldness plead,
And me the fault shall greater wisdom teach.
For clearly would he err, who should believe
The grace by thee distilled like heavenly rain
Frail works of mine could match that pass away.
Nor intellect, nor art may this achieve,
Since mortal man, a gift by God that's given,
Except in mortal kind, can ne'er repay.

XIV.

When art divine some noble attitude
And perfect form conceives of beauty rare,
The earliest offspring which that thought doth bear
Is made of humble clay, a model rude.
But what the chisel promised shall be yet
Brought forth a second time in living stone,
And is re-born so beautiful that none
To its eternity may limits set.
So I, a model of myself, was born,
A model of myself, to be by thee.
In aftertime more perfect born again.
If thou my superfluity hast shorn,
My wants fulfilled : for this thy ministry
What penitence shall not my love attain !

XV.

The greatest sculptor can no thought conceive
That doth not lie deep buried in the stone :
And this the hand discovereth alone,
Which doth commandment from the mind receive.
The ill I flee, the good I seek to gain,
In thee, sweet lady, noble and divine,
Are hidden thus ; and mortal woe is mine,
Since art the end it would not doth attain.
Neither hath love, nor hath thy beauty part
In my undoing : wrath, nor cruelty,
Nor sovereign fate, this evil compasseth :
If thou both death and pity in thy heart
Dost carry : and so little wit have I,
My love may nothing win from thence but death.

XVI.

As words with pen and ink by poets writ
Are framed in lofty or in simple mood,
And as the marble form is fair or rude,
According to the mind that shapeth it ;
So, dearest friend, for each proud glance there may
A humble thought lie hid thy breast within,
But that alone which is to me akin
(As shows my face) can I aright portray.
Who grief of heart with tears and sighs doth sow,
(The dew, which falleth pure upon the soil,
From diverse seeds a diverse nature gains)
He for a harvest gathereth sheaves of woe :
And who true beauty seeks with grievous toil
Doth reap frail hopes, and sure and bitter pains.

XVII.

Lady, how can that be, which each discerns,
As slowly passing years the truth make known,
That longer lives the image carved in stone,
Than he, the maker, who to dust returns?
To the effect doth yield, surpassed, the cause,
And art of man doth nature's self subdue;
I know, who in fair sculpture prove it true,
Which still of time and death defies the laws.
Thus I to both us twain long life can give,
In paint or marble, as my wish may be
The semblance of thy face and mine to show.
And ages after we have ceased to live,
How fair thou wert, and I how sad, they'll see;
And that I was no fool to love thee so.

XVIII.

A heart of fiery sulphur, flesh of straw,
And bones that are like wood the sun has dried ;
A soul unbridled, that admits no guide,
Instant desire, and will that knows no law ;
Reason with halting utterance, blind and lame,
A world that teems at every turn with snares,
What marvel is't, if man at unawares
With the first fire he meets shall flash to flame ?
And beauteous art, if this from heaven on high
We bring with us, o'er nature's strength prevails,
Howe'er she strive with still unquenched desire :
If to that art nor deaf nor blind am I,
Responsive made to what my heart assails,
His is the fault, who doomed me to the fire.

XIX.

I have a dearer value than of yore,
Thee bearing in my heart, am worthier grown :
As when a jewel's set within the stone,
Its roughness seems more precious than before.
And as the written page regarded is
More than a wasted shred that useless lies,
Thus I, since for the arrows of thine eyes
I have become the mark, nor grieve at this.
Thy sign my talisman, where'er I will
I go, as one that hath some secret spell,
Which through all danger bringeth him secure ;
Water or fire on me can work no ill,
All darkness by thy token I dispel,
And with my spittle make all poison pure.

XX.

How great must be that happy garland's bliss,
That wreathes with flowers the hair of one I know :
Each flower would swifter than its neighbour go,
That he may first those golden tresses kiss.
All day contented with its happy lot
That bodice clasps her breast, or with it heaves :
And what the name of golden thread receives
Her cheek and neck from touching ceaseth not.
But joy more exquisite than aught beside
That ribbon hath, with golden fringes gay,
Which on the breast it laceth, resteth so ;
And the neat girdle round her waist that's tied,
Saith to itself, " This let me clasp alway : "
What then remaineth for my arms to do ?

XXI.

A worm there is, the meanest thing on earth,
Which, seeking others' good, forgets his own ;
Others to clothe, his gentle life lays down,
And first in death hath profit of his birth.
Thus with my body dead let destiny
The living body of my love array,
Since, as the serpent casts his slough away,
So changed at death may my condition be.
Oh had that shaggy hair but grown on me,
Whereof is wov'n the happy gown that ties
Thy beauteous bosom ; so the day at least
With thee I'd pass ; or I those shoes would be,
From which, their pedestal, thy limbs arise,
That thou, at least in rain, would'st on me rest.

XXII.

If in the silent eyes the heart do speak,
No token can I give more manifest
Of my consuming fire : in these expressed
Let love a guerdon from my lady seek.
Perchance with greater kindness than I thought
Thy spirit sees the flame that doth me waste,
And with swift pity to my aid will haste,
Since grace abounds that earnestly besought.
Oh happy day, if this be true indeed !
Then pause the sun upon his ancient track,
And time and all his hours that moment stay :
That I, a boon more great than is my meed,
In eager arms that true deserving lack,
My sweet, desirèd love may hold for aye.

XXIII.

Mine eyes though far away thy face can find,
And unforbid thy loveliness they see,
But these, oh lady, may not bear to thee
My arms and my two hands that lag behind.
The soul and unalloyèd mind have power
Ascending through the eyes, a freer way,
To reach thy beauty, but not love's self may
With such a gift the human body dower.
Heavy and doomed to die, it knows so ill
To follow, wingless, on an angel's flight,
In vision only may its glory be.
Oh, if in Heaven, as here on earth, thy will
Doth rule supreme, make all my senses sight,
That I may none possess, which knows not thee.

XXIV.

Oh noble spirit, noble semblance taking,
We mirrored in thy mortal beauty see
What heaven and earth achieve in harmony,
One work than all the rest diviner making.
Oh gracious spirit, true fulfilment giving
Of those fair signs upon thy forehead set,
Love, reverence, kindness: things which never yet
Were seen in such sweet league with beauty living.
Love doth me seize, and beauty bindeth me:
Straight to my heart thy sweet looks' piety
Doth make its way, sure hope implanting there.
What law immutable, or harsh decree,
Slow time, or swift-foot malice will deny
That death itself such loveliness should spare ?

XXV.

Tell me, kind love, if mine eyes see aright
The beauty of that face which I adore,
Or dwells it in my mind? since evermore,
The more I gaze, it groweth in my sight.
'Tis thou must know, who dost with her conspire,
(In vain my anger) all my peace to steal ;
Yet neither a less ardent flame to feel,
Nor one brief sigh to lose, would I desire.
“ Thy lady's is the beauty thou dost see,
Which through the eyes doth reach the soul within ;
And fairer in a purer region grows.
There is she decked in grace and purity,
Since spirit seeks what is to spirit kin ;
Her heavenly beauty thus to thee she shows.”

XXVI.

Great gladness may, no less than misery,
The thief o'erwhelm, who forth to death is led,
Frozen with fear, by hope abandonèd,
If sudden safety comes, and he is free.
Thus, lady, if, beyond thy wonted way,
For the great sorrow of my troubled mind,
Thou shoulds't be with too great compassion kind,
Than grief more cruel, me thy love would slay.
For if strange news too sweet or bitter prove,
In its opposed effects, swift death may lie,
As it weighs down the heart, or lifts again.
Then let thy beauty, born of heaven and love,
That I may live, great happiness deny ;
By too much joy, is feeble virtue slain.

XXVII.

My thought, up-borne on wings of fantasy,
Imagineth no fleeting shape of air,
Nor being clothed in mortal garb so fair,
It may my shield against thy beauty be.
So low I fall, if I do part from thee,
That love doth me of all my strength bereave,
And while I think in absence less to grieve,
My grief redoubled bringeth death to me.
No longer then availeth it to fly,
From beauty speeding, as before a foe ;
The slow against the swift his race hath lost.
But love with his own hand my tears doth dry,
And promise sweet reward for all my woe :
'Tis no mean thing so great a price can cost.

XXVIII.

My love finds not its life within my heart :
The love with which I love thee must be sought
Where passion dwelleth not, nor guilty thought,
And never may with mortal sin have part.
Love, when our souls came first from God on high,
Me wholly vision made, and splendour thee,
Which still my longing heart is fain to see,
In this thine earthly nature, doomed to die.
As heat from fire, my love from the ideal
Is parted never, and exalts whate'er
Its heavenly birthright doth on earth retain.
And since thine eyes all Paradise reveal,
With deep desire I seek thy glance, that where
I loved thee first, I may return again.

XXIX

When first thy matchless beauty met my sight,
I, like the sun-blind eagle, thought to close
Mine eyes before the smallest star of those
Bright stars, that clothe thy loveliness with light.
Then did I my unreasoned error learn ;
Who would an angel seek, and hath not wings,
He sows the rocks, and to the breezes flings
His words, nay, with his mind would God discern.
Then since that beauty, which mine eyes doth blind,
Permitteth not that I abide with thee,
And I no courage have far off to stay,
Where shall I turn ? What guide or guard shall find,
Availing in this strait to succour me
Whom presence doth consume, and absence slay ?

XXX.

I, with thine eyes, a beauteous light behold,
Which mine are blinded that they may not see ;
A weight I carry, else too great for me,
If thy feet's strength my halting feet uphold.
I, plumeless, on thy wings upborne do fly ;
With thy thoughts mounting, heights of heaven I scale :
Thy humour changed, I change from red to pale,
Cold in the sun, warm 'neath the winter sky.
My will its being hath alone in thine,
Within thy heart my thoughts conceivèd are ;
And words of mine, winged with thy breath, do fly.
Even as the moon, whose place no eyes divine
In heaven above, save only if she share
In the sun's radiance, so methinks am I.

XXXI.

If one pure love, if one supreme devotion,
One fate unite two hearts in harmony,
If grief of one the other's sorrow be,
If by two minds is felt one spirit's motion :
If one eternal soul is made for twain,
Uplifting both, and in one flight to heaven :
If by one burning shaft two breasts are riven,
Which deep implanted doth for aye remain :
If, self forgotten, each the other love,
With joy, that such sweet intermingling hath,
Each for his own the other's will doth take ;
If all twice-told the hundredth part would prove
Of such great love, and bond of mighty faith ;
Shall wrath avail to loose it, or to break ?

XXXII.

That earth lose not thy loveliness for aye,
But dower some gentler spirit therewithal,
I pray that nature may ingather all
That thievish time takes from thee day by day :
And form of thy serene and heavenly face
A beauteous shape divine, and for love's sake
Therein a heart of other fashion make,
That shall be filled with pity and with grace :
And garner too and treasure up my sighs,
And all the tears I've shed collect again,
And give to him who shall her lover be.
Perchance the man who doth that day arise
May move her pity with my grief and pain :
And win the grace that is withheld from me.

XXXIII.

The fire that's hid the stone's cold heart within,
If struck from thence, so true a friend is found,
The stone, by flame transformed, with others bound,
In some fair fane doth life eternal win.
The furnace-fires enduring it defies
Time's rigours, and doth still more precious grow ;
Even as a soul, made pure in realms below,
To join the god-like souls in heaven doth rise.
So, if the secret fire these limbs contain,
From me drawn out, dissolve me utterly,
Spent and destroyed, more life may yet be mine.
And if, consumed to dust, I live again,
Tempered by fire, I shall immortal be ;
Struck by no steel, but that fine gold of thine.

XXXIV.

In a cold face a burning fire I prove,
Which, kindling me, doth yet itself congeal ;
In two fair arms a mighty force I feel,
Which doth all other things, unmoving, move.
A peerless soul, to all beside unknown,
I see, which deathless brings to others death ;
I find one free, that my heart fettereth,
By that am hurt, which giveth joy alone.
Why should a beauteous face, beloved one,
Effects so contrary on mine have wrought,
If each but give the gift himself doth hold ?
Thus to my happy life, by thee undone,
Thou art the sun (so thou restore it not)
Which kindleth all the world, and yet is cold.

XXXV.

If the immortal yearning which constrains
And lifts the thoughts on high, should mine reveal,
She would perchance some touch of pity feel,
Who in the house of love disdainful reigns.
But since long life is to the soul decreed,
And, one short day enjoyed, the body dies,
Sense fails the soul's high worth to recognize,
And scarce interprets what it scarce can read.
What power, alas ! hath he to comprehend
The pure desire within the heart that burns,
Who still in others sees himself alone ?
My happy days with my belovèd friend
Are past and gone, since she to falsehood turns ;
'Tis true, truth lingers not when faith is gone.

XXXVI.

If any to his friend behoden be
For so great joy as life redeemed from death ;
What service paid, fit payment rendereth,
Or from his debt the debtor setteth free ?
Nay, if perchance 'twere so, forthwith were ended
The prospect fair of rich reward in store,
Since then the servitor would serve no more
By no bright hope of recompense attended.
Then, lady, that thy favour may o'er-reach
The utmost bounds of my desert, my part
For courtesy, ingratitudo shall be.
If debt for debt were justly paid by each,
My lady less beloved would rule my heart ;
There are no equal rights with royalty.

XXXVII.

Restore, ye springs and rivers, to mine eyes
That stream, not yours, which doth not cease to flow,
And you so richly nourisheth, that so
Beyond your wont with swift increase ye rise.
And thou, dense air, made heavy with my sighs,
That from my sad eyes shadest heaven's light,
Restore them to my heart, and let my sight
Pierce to the brightness which thy mists disguise.
Let earth its footprints to my feet restore,
The herb spring up again, which they did press,
And dullard echo send back my lament.
And let thine eyes give back my looks once more,
That I one day some other loveliness
May love, since thee so little I content.

XXXVIII.

My grievèd reason doth with me lament,
The while I look for happiness in love :
And thus my shame to mine own self doth prove,
With truthful words, and weighty argument.
“ Of thy bright sun what profit shalt thou have,
Save death ? Nor thine the bird’s new life from fire.”
But nought avails : who doth his fall desire
No hand, how strong or swift so e’er, can save.
My loss I know, nor can the truth gainsay :
Another heart the while I harbour here,
Which smites me, yielding more, more grievously.
Behold, between two deaths my love doth stay,
Nature conceives not one, one doth she fear :
While thus I doubt, both soul and body die.

XXXIX.

Whether it be the radiance of that light
That shines in God, the longing soul doth feel,
I know not ; or if memory reveal
Some earthly beauty to the inner sight ;
Or if fame's breath, or magic of sweet sleep
With such a vision eyes and heart inspire,
As vanishing should leave some unknown fire,
Which is perchance the cause that thus I weep.
To that I feel and seek no guide there is
To guide me, and though one the way should show,
Methinks I have no skill to find and see.
Since first thy face I saw, oh lady, this
Hath been my lot ; a bitter-sweet to know :
In truth, thine eyes the cause thereof must be.

XL.

He who from nothingness created time,
Which in the abyss was not, made two of one,
Gave this, for ruler, the earth-loving moon,
And that the sun, who heaven's height doth climb.
Whence in a moment flowed from each to earth
The streams of chance, and two-fold destiny ;
And heaven the darker time assigned to me,
As one akin thereto in breed and birth.
And night, as fain her form to multiply,
Grows darker, as she travels on her way,
And I more sad, for all the ill I do.
And yet with this I am consoled, that I
With my dark night may brighter make the day,
That at your birth was given to dwell with you.

XLI.

Each hollow space, that closed or covered lies,
Whate'er by matter dense is screened from light,
Preserving darkness in the sun's despite,
To day her radiant privilege denies.
And if or flame or fire dark night assail,
The sun thereby, with meaner agents, may
Her holy image blur and chase away ;
Yea, a poor worm to mar it doth avail.
Beneath the shining sun lies bare the earth,
And with a thousand herbs and seeds she teems,
While o'er her the rude farmer ploughs his way.
But darkness only doth to man give birth,
Who than all other fruit more precious seems ;
Then is the night more holy than the day.

XLII.

When Phœbus doth no more encircling fold
Within his shining arms the earth's cold frame,
The multitude do night the season name,
Since now no longer they the sun behold.
And she doth seem so weak, a candle may,
A little candle, where it sheds its light,
The life of night destroy ; and eke so slight
That steel and tinder do her rend and slay.
And if perchance she's anything at all,
Of earth and sun she doth the daughter seem,
Since one creates her, and she dwells in one.
Howbeit who praises her, his wit is small ;
Unmated she, and of such poor esteem,
With her a glow-worm wageth war alone.

XLIII.

Oh night, dark-browed but beautiful thou art !
(In peace at last all labour ends on earth)
He sees aright, who doth extol thy worth,
And he who honours thee, is wise of heart.
Thou mak'st to cease all weary thought and care,
For thy cool shades do softly gather rest :
And me from lowest realms to loftiest,
Whither I long to go, in dreams dost bear.
Shadow of death, when thou art near, the soul
Can soothe each pain that doth man's heart oppress,
Thou last and surest remedy of woe.
Thou dost our feeble flesh again make whole,
Our tears dost dry, and heal our weariness ;
And by thy aid the good do wrath forego.

XLIV.

When some poor slave, bound by a cruel chain,
Doth many days a hopeless prisoner lie,
Use doth so mate him with his misery,
He scarce desireth to be free again.
Use doth the tiger and the snake restrain,
And quell the forest-king's ferocity :
And who in some new craft his skill would try,
Redoubled power he shall by practice gain.
But not with this the form of fire agrees :
For though the green branch it in ashes lay,
It heats the old dead wood, and nourishes ;
And sets the feet of age in youth's green way,
Rekindling it with life, and joy's increase,
Till heart and soul love in his robe array.

Whoso doth jest, and say
That this unto a hoary head were shame,
To love God's likeness, doth a lie proclaim :

Nor is that soul to blame
Which, undeluded, nature's child doth love,
If it keep measure, and in limits move.

XLV.

If youth's bright flower, with flame that's unconcealed,
Slow-kindled in few hours do waste away,
What of an aged heart, that burns alway
With an insatiate fire to none revealed ?
And if, as through life's lengthened course we move,
Our strength be spent, and all our courage gone,
What shall he be, by nature's hand undone,
When added are the furnace-fires of love ?
This fate is his, as 'twill be mine, forsooth :
His ashes shall the kindly winds disperse,
That noisome worms in him may have no share.
If for a little flame I wept in youth,
What hope that now, consumed by fires so fierce,
The soul may long the body's burden bear !

XLVI.

Oh, if the fire they kindle were the same
As is the radiance of thy beauteous eyes,
Straight would the earth, that cold and lifeless lies,
Flash like a burning arrow into flame.
But heaven, in pity for our evil lot,
Hath us despoilèd of the power to see
All beauty which it lavisheth on thee,
That peace our mortal life abandon not.
Beauty is greater than the earthly fire
It kindles ; since we love that part alone
Of heaven's gift, which we discern below.
This also doth my hoary age inspire ;
Thou think'st I love thee not ? 'Tis thereby shown,
Since I but little burn, I little know.

XLVII.

If long delay more happiness ensure
Than when desire's first prayer swift pity hears,
Mine grieveth me, weighed down with many years ;
An old man's joy doth little time endure.
Heaven likes it not,—if Heaven for mortals care—
That we in chilly age should burn with love :
Hence, while its fire I for my lady prove,
E'en as my days, my sad tears numbered are.
But haply now that all my day is done,
And 'neath the verge my sun is sinking fast,
Where night unending, and cold shadows reign ;
If love's flame burn in life's midway alone,
And I still love, when all love's time is past,
'Tis thou, for old age, giv'st me youth again.

XLVIII.

I from pure tears to laughter born of pain,
From peace eternal to short-lived content
Am fallen: for when truth's admonishment
Is heard no more, soul strives with sense in vain.
Nor know I if the evil take its rise
(An evil still more dear, the more it grows)
From my own heart, or from that torch which glows
Within thine eyes, the spoils of Paradise.
Thy beauty is not of this world below,
But made divine in heaven, for earth's delight;
Whence I, consumed in flame, do comfort me,
That by thy side I cannot but be so:
If Heaven hath forged the bolt that is to smite,
Who, if I die, can charge the crime to thee?

XLIX.

Had I believed that, when thy spirit's fire
First caught and kindled mine, I should arise
New-born from flame, as when the phoenix dies,
He fresh with youth soars from his burning pyre ;
How swifter than the swiftest stag or pard,
That seeks its food, or flees what it doth fear,
To see that smile, those gracious words to hear,
I would have run, whom now the years retard.
Yet why, for time that's gone, shed useless tears,
Since in that bright and peerless angel's eyes,
My peace, my refuge and my rest I see ?
Perchance to know her in my earlier years
Less good had been, since now with her to rise
In equal flight her virtue wingeth me.

L.

Oh, love, give back to me the time that's fled,
When loose was blinded passion's bridle-rein :
That angel's face serene give back again,
Within whose tomb lies every virtue dead ;
And give the tireless feet that toiled for thee,
Since his are laggard grown that's full of years ;
Give back within my breast the fire and tears,
If thou again would'st have thy will of me.
If it be true that on the sweet and sore
Laments of mortals thou dost live alone,
From one old, weary man, what shalt thou gain ?
My soul hath alnlost reached the further shore,
And thrills of purer love than thine hath known :
A burnt-out ember fire doth prove in vain.

LI.

Mine eyes beheld a sight earth knows not of,
When thine with perfect peace my heart did fill ;
But such as inly, where she loves no ill,
With love akin to her, my soul doth move.
Like God create, content she cannot be
With that fair seeming which doth please the eye ;
Since such delusive proves, she seeks on high
The beauty dwelling in eternity.
The thing that dies no perfect joy can give
The living soul, nor may the eternal take
His part with time, whom changing years fulfil.
Wild will, not love, doth in the senses live,
And slays the soul : but love doth lovers make
Perfect on earth, in heaven more perfect still.

LII.

Not always is this counted mortal sin,
A beauteous form with passion to adore,
If thus the softened heart shall yield the more,
And suffer darts from heaven to pierce within.
Love wakes the soul, and gives it wings to fly,
But not in vain desire its course shall end :
By this uplifted first, it doth ascend
To God, with whom is no satiety.
This is the love that leads to realms on high,
But woman's beauty draws the soul from thence :
Not such desire the wise of heart should know.
One aims on earth, and one beyond the sky,
This doth the soul inhabit, that the sense,
And at things base and common bends his bow.

LIII.

Belovèd, in thy beauteous eyes I see
What hardly may in mortal speech be told ;
The soul doth mount on high till it behold,
Still clothed in flesh, the face of deity.
And though the foolish multitude and base,
In others see what their own hearts inspire,
Not less shall love and passionate desire,
And faith and pure devotion meet with grace.
All beauty that to human sight is given
Is but the shadow, if we rightly see,
Of Him from whom man's spirit issueth.
No other sign is seen nor fruit of heaven
On earth : and if I love thee faithfully,
I rise to God on high, and sweet is death.

LIV.

Thou know'st, beloved, I know that thou dost know
I for the sweetness of thy presence came :
Thou know'st I know thou know'st I am the same,
Then why to greet delay we longer now ?
If true the hope which thou to me did'st give,
And true the pure desire within my heart,
Be rent the wall that each from each doth part ;
Who grief conceals, with double grief doth live.
If that, beloved, I love in thee alone,
Which thou thyself most lovest, be not grieved :
For spirit doth to spirit only yearn.
That which thy beauty to my love hath shown
Is dimly by the human mind perceived ;
And who would know, of death he needs must learn.

LV.

Thy soul descending from its home on high
Awhile within a prison-house of clay
Doth tarry, as a pitying angel may,
To heal the mind, and earth to glorify.
This kindleth me, for this I burn with love,
Not for the outward beauty of thy face :
Where virtue lodges, love can find no place,
That loveth what with moving time doth move.
Thus nature doth her noblest offspring bear
With mighty travailing : while heaven doth hail
The birth with largess bountiful and free.
Nor doth God, of His grace, to me appear
More oft than in some beauteous mortal veil,
And this I love, since Him therein I see.

LVI.

Whatever hath of beauty the sweet dower,
Doth straightway, by so smooth a road and wide,
Into the heart between the eyelids glide,
That such of all created kinds each hour
In thousands enter : whence perplexèd still,
By ignorance encumbered, passion's prey,
I trembling doubt, lest mortal beauty may
With so short-lived delight desire fulfil,
It heavenward may not rise. Who with the fire
Of falsehood is inflamed, that fills the earth,
(Which scarce the thing that gives it life, may flee;))
If grace uplift not his supreme desire
To purer beauty of diviner birth,
Oh, what is life to him but misery !

LVII.

Each time that to my passion-provèd heart
Is shown my idol's image, straight appears
Between us Death; and me he fills with fears,
And bids that vision from my sight depart.
The soul hath from such outrage more content,
Than if she should all fortune else enjoy;
Unconquered love doth surer arms employ
For his defence, and truer argument.
“ Man dies but once; nor evermore,” saith he
“ Is born again. What then, if one by love
Consumed, shall dwell ere death in death's abode?
Since fire of love, from which the soul's set free,
To every ardent heart a loadstone prove,
Like purgèd gold, he shall return to God.”

LVIII.

By fire the maker doth with labour mould
The iron to the beauty of his thought ;
By fire alone the precious ore is wrought,
And purged to perfect purity of gold.
Consumed in fire the sacred phoenix may
His life regain : hence if I burning die,
I shall more joyful rise with those on high,
Whom time harms not, and death bids live for aye.
Great joy to me the furnace flames of love,
Since now with life I am renewed thereby,
Whom length of days long since to death had given.
If fire do soar to seek its home above,
And I into its being pass and die,
What hinders, that I rise not too to heaven ?

LIX.

Well may sure hope at times, on wings elate,
Mount with my burning passion to the skies ;
If every love be sinful in His eyes,
To what end was the world by God create ?
What cause more righteous for my loving thee
Than Him that is th' eternal Peace to praise,
Who in its robe divine thy soul arrays,
And purifies all hearts that gentle be.
In vain and mocking hope that love hath part
Which liveth but for passing beauty's hour,
And with a fair face changing fades and dies :
But sweet the hope within a chastened heart,
O'er which nor envious time, nor death hath power,
And which doth earnest give of paradise.

LX.

ON THE DEATH OF VITTORIA COLONNA.

If my rude hammer the unwilling stone
To human form and attitude doth mould,
It moves with him, who doth it guide and hold,
His will and impulse taking for its own.
But one diviner doth in heaven abide,
Which shapeth beauty with no hand to aid ;
No hammer is, save by another, made,
Then doth th' eternal one make all beside.
And as the hammer that is raised on high,
With greater force doth on the forge descend,
So that, to mould my own, to heaven is gone.
Whence mine unperfected must useless lie,
Unless that instrument divine shall lend
Its aid in heaven, which here availed alone.

LXI.

ON THE DEATH OF VITTORIA COLONNA.

When from this world, and from my sight, was torn
The minister of all my grief and woe,
Nature, who lured her soul to dwell below,
Was put to shame, and all who saw did mourn.
Oh fate, to love unkind ! Oh hopes that fled
Like vanished dreams ! Being of spirit-birth,
Where art thou now ? Thy beauteous limbs the earth,
And heaven thy holy thoughts, hath garnerèd.
Thus impiously boasted death that he
Her many-tonguèd virtue's silver sound
Had power to still, and make her soul less fair.
In vain his vaunt ; by craft of poesie,
More than in life itself, she life hath found,
And dead doth first the bliss of heaven share.

LXII.

ON THE DEATH OF VITTORIA COLONNA.

Would I had quitted earth that happy day,
When shining Phœbus filled the world with light,
Then would her wings have winged me for the flight,
And all death's bitterness have passed away.
Now hath she gone ; and if the bright days given
I vainly hoped would pass less swiftly by,
My thankless soul pays its just penalty,
That, losing earth, is yet shut out from heaven.
Then had I wings to fly, the rugged road
Was smooth, the sun my pathway radiant made ;
Then joy, nay life itself, was found in death.
Dying alone, I cannot rise to God ;
And even memory strives in vain to aid ;
Too late, when all is lost, who counselleth ?

LXIII.

ON THE DEATH OF VITTORIA COLONNA.

What wonder I, who next the fire did burn,
Now that which lit the flame is quenched for aye,
Should waste with inward grief, and day by day
More dully glowing into ashes turn?
I love-enkindled saw in radiant light
The source whence issued all my grief and ill;
And me the sight alone with joy did fill,
And death and torment were become delight.
But since the splendour of that burning flame,
Whence mine was nurtured, Heaven doth take away,
A covered ember, smouldering low, am I.
And if I may not borrow in love's name
Some other fuel, not one spark for aye
Will rise from me, who thus in ashes lie.

LXIV.

Now draws my life's long voyage to its close,
And after ocean's storms my little sail
Doth reach that harbour, where to tell his tale
Of evil deeds and good each mortal goes.
Imagination's sensuous delight,
Which made of art my idol and my queen,
I know how fraught with error it hath been,
And what man seeketh in his own despite.
What are the thoughts of love, once light and vain,
When I two deaths do in my path discern?
One is heaven's menace, one its fixed decree.
Chisel nor brush shall satisfy again
The soul which to that love divine doth turn,
That oped its arms to us on Calvary.

LXV.

My years and days were mine to worship God,
But these the world to its vain uses turned :
And not alone His grace I heedless spurned,
But by its light the path of evil trod.
The fount of wisdom darkness was to me,
Who slow to learn so late my error know,
Hope faileth, but desire the more doth grow,
That thou from love of self would'st set me free.
Make short the road that leadeth to the skies,
For half the way I scarce may upward press,
Unless Thou, Lord, Thy heavenly aid bestow.
The tale of this world's worth let me despise,
And all its well-loved forms of loveliness,
That I on earth eternal life may know.

LXVI.

No baser thing upon the earth doth live
Than that I feel myself apart from thee ;
Then to my halting will's infirmity
Let unfulfilled desire its pardon give.
Reach forth to me, O God, that mystic chain
Which every gift celestial links in one ;
Faith, would I say, and 'tis my fault alone,
That I for its full measure strive in vain.
So much the greater as the rarer good
That gift of gifts : most great herein we see,
That peace by it alone on earth is given.
And though thou did'st not grudge thy precious blood,
What profit of thy mercy's gift shall be,
The one key wanting which doth open Heaven ?

LXVII.

Through grace divine, and after toil and woe,
We surely shall in Heaven each other greet,
But ere we yield our latest breath, 'twere meet
We should awhile be happy here below.
Though rugged mountains frown and oceans roll
Between us twain : yet never fervent hearts
Winter with all its frosty rigours parts,
Nor fetters may the wings of thought control.
Wherein I evermore with thee do stay
And of my dead Urbino speak and weep,
Who living would be with me by thy side,
As once I thought : his death another way
Doth draw me now, where he his watch doth keep,
Till coming thither I with him abide.

LXVIII.

Unknown the hour of death, that draweth nigh :
Brief span hath life, and passeth swiftly hence :
Its earthly sojourn doth delight the sense,
But still my soul entreateth me to die.
Blind are the eyes of men, and vanquishèd
By base example, virtue prostrate lies :
All light is turned to darkness, courage dies,
In falsehood's triumph, truth is captive led.
Oh God, when shall that be, which those who wait
On Thee do look for ? Since, deferred too late,
Hope fainting doth the soul to death betray.
Of what avail to promise joys so great,
If death befall us first, and in that state,
In which it find us, helpless hold for aye ?

LXIX.

Heavy with years, and vexèd sore by sin,
Rooted in uses of iniquity,
The first and second death at hand I see,
Yet cherish evil thoughts my heart within.
Not mine, oh Lord, the power that I need,
To change my life, my passions, and my fate,
Unless Thy light my path illuminate,
And Thou, not I, my steps control and lead.
'Tis not enough the deep desire to give
For that pure world where, grown divine, the soul
No more from nothingness shall be create.
Ere thou of mortal garb do her deprive,
Make short the steep path to that heavenly goal,
That brighter hope may on my footsteps wait.

LXX.

Perchance since pity dwells my heart within,
Or since, self-confidence my only guide,
No more the faults of others I deride,
My soul hath lost those heights it once did win.
Beneath no banner save Thy cross alone
May I, who conquer not, yet hope for life ;
Nor may I bear the tumult of the strife,
Save Thou my strength make perfect with Thine own.
Oh blood-stained cross, oh grief and pain untold,
Me guilt-convicted ye do justify,
Who was in sin by sinful sire begot.
Holy art Thou alone : do Thou uphold
In pity my sin-doomèd soul, that nigh
To death abiding hath God's face forgot.

LXXI.

Oh, let me everywhere Thy presence see !
If mortal beauty kindle my desire,
Thy radiance divine shall quench the fire,
And I, as once for this, shall burn for Thee.
Dear Lord, to Thee I make my prayer alone,
This torment of blind passion to restrain :
Within, without, Thou canst restore again,
The strength that fails, the will that's feeble grown.
Thou did'st my heaven-born soul to earth awake,
And, frail and helpless still, in sin's abode
With cruel destiny incarcerate.
How can I live, and yet this life forsake ?
All good doth fail me, save in Thee, O God :
With Heaven alone it rests to alter fate.

LXXII.

From the sore burden of my sin set free,
To Thee, dear Lord, I turn, earth's fetters riven,
Like some frail bark, by raging tempests driven,
That finds a haven of tranquillity.
Each wounded hand outspread, the nails, the thorns,
The loving pity of Thy grieved face,
To deepest penitence do promise grace,
And hope of safety to the soul that mourns.
Not with strict justice let Thine eyes survey
My past, nor, bidden by Thy righteous ears,
Do thou Thy stern, chastising arm uplift.
Let Thy blood cleanse, and take my sins away,
The more abounding, for my many years,
In ready aid, and pardon's perfect gift.

LXXIII.

Though great desire doth promise oft to give
Unto my years' long tale yet many a year,
Death none the less doth with each day draw near,
And hath less haste for him who would not live.
Why hope for more and yet more days of joy,
Since we in sorrow only worship God?
Fair fortune's gifts, with length of life bestowed,
The more they please us, do the more destroy.
And if, dear Lord, by heavenly benison,
That burning zeal at times to me is given,
Which doth th' uplifted soul with strength fulfil :
A gift beyond all striving of my own ;
That moment let me pass from earth to heaven,
Since febler grows, with growth of time, the will.

LXXIV.

The thing I would, that doth my will refuse ;
Between my heart, and Thy love's fire is spread
A sheet of ice, and lo, the fire is dead ;
Words lie, when words with deeds no fealty use.
My lips do love, but my heart strives with Thee,
For love doth reach it not, nor have I skill
To ope the door, whereby Thy grace doth fill
The heart, and banish proud impiety.
Rend thou the veil, oh Lord, break down the wall,
That with its denseness doth Thy sun conceal,
And in this darkened world forbid to shine.
Send forth Thy promised light, that it may fall
On Thy fair bride, the soul, until it feel
Thy presence clear, and burn with love divine.

LXXV

With mourning did the blessed spirits see,
With mourning and with joy, that Thou had'st died,
And dying in their place, had'st opened wide
The gates of Heaven to mortality.
With joy, because, death's bondsman from his fall,
The man Thou mad'st, Thou did'st redeem again ;
With mourning since, in great and bitter pain,
Thou on the cross wast made the last of all.
But whence Thou wert, the heavens by signs did show :
The mountains trembled, ocean's depths were moved,
The sun was turned to darkness, earth was riven :
The mighty dead uprose from realms below :
More bitter pains the evil angels proved :
And man alone rejoiced, new-born to heaven.

LXXVI.

The wounding mem'ries of the past do seem
To bring withal a solace, when they speak
Of sin and sorrow, and would reckoning take
Of that lost time I never may redeem.
They solace, since I learn, while yet I live,
In human joy how little trust to place :
They wound, because of mercy and of grace
The hour of death no certain hope doth give.
For though, oh Lord, we wait upon Thy word,
We scarcely dare our doubting souls assure
Thy pity will to long delay extend.
Yet learn we from Thy sign of blood out-poured,
That, since untold the pains Thou did'st endure,
Thy loving kindness too doth know no end.

SONNETS LEFT UNFINISHED BY MICHELANGELO AND
COMPLETED BY HIS GRAND-NEPHEW.

LXXVII

For aye the sun his lonely path doth tread,
Guiding the universe through realms of space,
Yet not for aye he shows the self-same face,
But in changed mood doth changing favours shed.
On divers men diversely doth he shine,
And brighter seem, and now less bright his rays,
As weakness the o'erwhelmèd mind dismayes
That meets the glory of the proof divine.
So, lady, doth the beauty of thy face,
And thy soul's worth, with radiance more bright,
And deeper hold, the nobler heart possess.
But if from thence the soul win little grace,
'Tis that the splendour of thy spirit's light,
O'erpassing measure, doth the strength oppress.

LXXVIII.

For the sharp wounding of love's dart in vain
I looked for medicine, save from death alone :
But this my love possesseth for her own,
That life itself doth spring, whence springeth pain.
Though his first stroke in mortal wise was given,
Yet did a messenger from love draw nigh,
And say : " Love on, nay burn : for if thou die,
Thou shalt have wings no more to rise to heaven.
For I am he who, in thine early days,
Did towards that beauty turn thy feeble sight,
Which from this earth to heaven in life doth lead.
Again I bid thee worship this always,
And weary not : for verily of light
Old age hath on his way the greater need."

LXXIX.

Flee from the fire of love, oh lovers, flee !
Fierce is his furnace, and his wound is death :
No strength availeth him who dallieth,
Nor change of place, nor reason's subtlety.
Flee, that my lot no fruitless warning prove,
And e'en as me his mighty dart doth smite,
So read ye what shall be your evil plight,
And what the cruel sport of ruthless love.
Flee the first glance : nor parley, nor delay :
For I too thought with time a truce to make,
And how I burn with love all men may see.
Oh thrice a fool, who 'neath desire's false sway
Doth brave love's arrow, for sweet beauty's sake !
To his own good both blind and deaf is he.

LXXX.

A beauteous face doth lift my soul to heaven,
(For nought beside is there on earth I love)
Living I pass among the souls above,
A grace to mortal man that's rarely given.
The work doth match its Maker in such wise,
That I in thought divine to Him ascend,
And loving greatly a sweet human friend,
Do all my speech and thoughts with God devise.
Then if from two bright eyes I cannot turn,
It is that in their radiance I see
The light that guideth me in God's own way.
And if I, kindled by their beauty, burn,
That pure and holy flame doth light in me
The joy in heaven above that shines for aye.

LXXXI.

'Twas near this spot my love from me did take
Her prize, my heart, and my life afterward,
Here did her fair eyes promise me reward,
And here to me she kindly greeting spake.
Here did she bind me, here unloose the knot,
Here did I laugh with tears, and from that height
With grief unmeasured watch her pass from sight,
Who took myself from me, and loved me not.
Hither returning oft I sit alone,
Nor less for those past pains, than for joy's sake,
The place where first I loved her sacred is.
Now do I laugh, now weep for times bygone,
According, Love, as thou in me dost wake,
Cruel or sweet, my passion's memories.

LXXXII.

Whoso with truth of heart the work doth scan,
To him great joy the chief of arts can give,
Portraying face and gesture, limbs that live,
Until, in clay or stone, behold, a man.
If then injurious time, with churlish will,
Do diminish it, or wholly bring to nought,
Yet shall its beauty live within the thought,
Till heaven the transient joy of earth fulfil.
Thy beauty thus, which is a model made
By the great Master of immortal art,
The grace that dwells in heaven on earth to show ;
Though with each passing year it pass and fade,
So much the more shall dwell within my heart,
Which seeketh beauty that no change can know.

LXXXIII.

The fire within my frozen heart that burned,
Now, ice itself, hath its own heat forgot,
Since loosed is love's indissoluble knot,
And that which once was joy, to grief is turned.
The love which gave me comfort and repose
Hath in my misery a burden grown
To my tired soul : and faint I lie, as one
Whose little day draws swiftly to its close.
Ah, cruel death, how would thy stroke be sweet,
If thou, when friend from friend thou severest,
To him bereft would'st his last hour declare.
Not then would I delay time's wingèd feet
With long-drawn sorrows, nor, by grief oppressed,
Make heavy with my sighs the saddened air.

LXXXIV.

Why comes so late, with lingering steps and slow,
The radiant messenger of heavenly love,
Who raiseth me from earth to realms above,
Whither no soul of its own strength can go ?
Perchance between each word of Thy love's speech
Thou dost long silence interpose for this :
That since the rarer good more longed for is,
Thy grace with greater power the heart may reach.
Thy word is day : Thy silence is the night :
One turns to ice, and one inflames my heart
With love, with faith, and with celestial fire.
He knows, who hath endured to see that light
Whose radiance doth my passion's flame impart,
That in God only is the soul's desire.

LXXXV.

Unnumbered times, through many a bygone year,
I, by thy might, have vanquished been and slain ;
And now my hairs are white, shall I again
Unto thy foolish promises give ear ?
How oft hast thou, unkind, my will constrained,
How oft has slackened : with what spurs my side
Hast pierced until death's pallor I outvied,
While countless tears upon my bosom rained.
Love, thou dost wrong me : I with thee would plead,
Free now from thy delusions : what the gain,
Aiming at space, to bend thy cruel bow ?
Of burnt-out timber hath the woodman need,
Or e'en the moth ? who runs his course again
When strength is gone, he bitter shame shall know.

EPIGRAM OF GIOVANBATTISTA STROZZI ON MICHEL-
ANGELO'S STATUE OF NIGHT.

Night, whom thou here in sweetest sleep dost see,
Was carved in marble by an angel's skill,
And since they live who sleep, she liveth still :
Thou doubtst ? Wake her, she will speak with thee.

REPLY OF MICHELANGELO.

Grateful to me is sleep, more grateful so
To sleep in stone, while shame and sorrow reign :
To see not, nor to feel, to me is gain :
Therefore awake me not, but whisper low.

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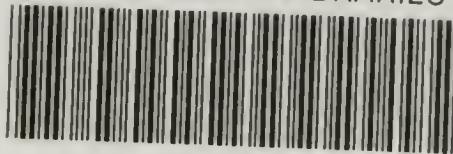
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